ASHERAH

Goddesses in Ugarit, Israel and the Old Testament

Tilde Binger

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CONTENTS

PREFACE

The original version of this book was written in 1991. Since the dissertation originally left my hands many things have happened, some that have helped this book along to its final form, and others that have not. The main problem in preparing and at times re-writing the book has been that in 1992 two books appeared that changed the historical dimensions of Old Testament scholarship radically. I am naturally referring to Philip Davies's *In Search of 'Ancient Israel'* and Thomas L. Thompson's *Early History of the Israelite People*. It will be evident that the bulk of the present book was written before these books came into print, since most of the 'historical' arguments found here are now obsolete.

Nor have I been able to incorporate fully the more recent books on the same subject as my own, that is, Asherah. Thus the work of M. Dietrich and O. Loretz, *Jahwe und seine Aschera* (1992), of S.A. Wiggins, *A Reassessment of 'Asherah'* (1993) and of O. Keel and C. Uehlinger *Göttinnen, Götter und Gottessymbole* (1992) have not been incorporated to any major extent.

With regards to iconography, I must confess that I have taken the easy way out. I have practically not discussed it, since my knowledge on the subject is close to non-existent (the only mention is in the short excursus on Qudšu, where the subject could not be ignored). Another reason for not incorporating the subject of iconography was that Urs Winter's monumental *Frau und Göttin*, both then and now, must be considered the scholarly work of reference. Since I can in no way do better than him, and since I had no wish to attempt a short and sweet version of his book, I preferred not to discuss the subject at all. All translations from Ugaritic, Hebrew and Greek are—when nothing else is noted—made by me.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

ABBREVIATIONS

ABD	D.N. Freedman (ed.), *Anchor Bible Dictionary*
AHw	W. von Soden, *Akkadisches Handwörterbuch*
AION	Istituto orientale di Napoli, Annali
ANEP	J.B. Pritchard (ed.), *Ancient Near Eastern Pictures relating to the Old Testament*
ANET	J.B. Pritchard (ed.), *Ancient Near Eastern Texts relating to the Old Testament*
AnOr	Analecta Orientalia
AOAT	Alter Orient und Alter Testament
APFC	A. Cowley, *Aramaic Papyri of the Fifth Century BC*
ARTU	J.C. de Moor, *An Anthology of Religious Texts from Ugarit*
BA	*Biblical Archaeologist*
BARev	*Biblical Archaeology Review*
BASOR	*Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*
BGUL	S. Segert, *A Basic Grammar of the Ugaritic Language*
BHS	*Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*
BZAW	Beihefte zur ZAW
CAD	*The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago*
CARTU	J.C. de Moor, and C. Spronk, *A Cuneiform Anthology of Religious Texts from Ugarit*
CML	J.C.L. Gibson, *Canaanite Myths and Legends*
CTA	Andrée Herdner, *Corpus des tablettes en cunéiformes alphabétiques descouvertes à Ras Shamra—Ugarit de 1929 à 1939*, 2 vols.
DTT	*Dansk Teologisk Tidsskrift*
GDB	*Gads Danske Bibelleksikon*
GKB	Gesenius–Kautsch–Bergsträsser, *Hebräische Grammatik*
HAHAT	W. Gesenius, *Hebräisches und Aramäisches Handwörterbuch über das Alte Testament*
HSM	Harvard Semitic Monographs
HTR	*Harvard Theological Review*
IEJ	*Israel Exploration Journal*
JA	*Journal asiatique*
JBL	Journal of Biblical Literature
JNES	*Journal of Near Eastern Studies*
JSOT	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*
KAI	H. Donner and W. Röllig, *Kanaanäische und Aramäische Inschriften*

KB	L. Koehler and W. Baumgartner (eds.), *Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti libros*
KJV	King James Version
KML	F.O. Hvidberg-Hansen, *Kanaanœiske Myter og Legender*
KTU	M. Dietrich, O. Loretz and J. Sanmartin, *Die Keilalphabetischen Texte aus Ugarit*
Lisowsky	G. Lisowsky, *Konkordanz zum Hebräischen Alten Testament*
LSJ	Liddell–Scott–Jones, *Greek–English Lexicon*
MIO	*Mitteilungen des Instituts für Orientforschung der Deutschen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin*
MLC	G. del Olmo Lete, *Mitos y Leyendas de Canaan segun la Tradicion de Ugarit*
OBO	Orbis biblicus et orientalis
OLP	Orientalia Iovaniensia periodica
PDK	E.F. Weidner, *Politische Dokumente aus Kleinasien. Die Staatsverträge akkadischer Sprache aus dem Archiv von Boghazköi*
Pedersen	J. Pedersen, *Hebrœisk Grammatik*
PRU II	C. Virolleaud, *Palais Royal d'Ugarit. II. Mission de Ras Shamra*, VII
RB	*Revue biblique*
RCatT	Revista Catalana de Teologia
RHA	*Revue Hittite et Asianique*
RLA	*Reallexicon der Assyrologie*
RSV	Revised Standard Version
SBLMS	Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series
SEL	*Studi Epigrafici e Linguistici sul Vicino Oriente antico essedue edizioni*
SJOT	*Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament*
TAB	*Times Atlas of the Bible*
TO	*Textes Ougaritiques. I. Mythes et Legendes*; II. *Textes religieux et rituels et correspondance*
TUAT	*Texte aus der Umwelt des Alten Testament*
ThWAT	*Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament*
UF	*Ugarit-Forschungen*
UG	Ugaritica
UT	C.H. Gordon, *Ugaritic Textbook*
VT	*Vetus Testamentum*
VTSup	*Vetus Testamentum*, Supplements
Whitaker	R.E. Whitaker, *A Concordance of the Ugaritic Literature*
WUS	J. Aistleitner, *Wörterbuch der Ugaritischen Sprache*
ZA	*Zeitschrift der Assyrologie*
ZAW	*Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*
ZDPV	*Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins*

Chapter 1

METHOD

A scholarly field like theology, whose object is an examination and systematization of metaphysics, exists methodologically speaking in a strange vacuum, or if one prefers it put another way, does a weird balancing act between a multitude of various and not necessarily compatible methods, primarily taken from different fields of humanities. Theology has practically no independent theoretical apparatus. Dogmatics and ethics use philosophical methods, history of the church uses the methods of political history, and exegesis uses more or less the lot. No theological method exists that takes into account the fact that a theologian must deal with, discuss and dissect that material that is—more often than not—the basis of his or her own faith, or, in the case of the scholar defining him or herself as an agnostic, perhaps the most important constituent factor in the culture he or she works and lives in.

The situation is no different for a scholar of the Old Testament than it is for theology as such. If we set apart the 'pure' exegetical methods that have the religious reading and understanding of the material as their starting point, and an understanding on the personal level of the metaphysical content, there is no 'Old Testament method' that can, with any kind of certainty, give us any knowledge about the culture and society that these books came from, or tell us anything of that society's concepts of religion.[1] This lack of method is behind the present chapter's attempt to set forth some of the methodological and theoretical reflections that form the foundation of this work.

Many methods have been used in the work dealing with the Israelite, Ugaritic and Old Testament material, but, as mentioned above, none of these takes into account that part of this material is a deter-

1.   I am in a way referring to the ongoing discussion of when the Old Testament was written, by whom and why. While no consensus has been reached, this question is too difficult to deal with, and this is not the proper place to make the attempt.

mining factor in the culture and identity of most of the scholars work-
ing with it. One way to deal with the problem is to attempt to use pos-
itivistic or Comteist methods, even though these were created to deal
with quite different problems, in a different set of scientific fields
altogether, namely the natural sciences (cf. Kjørup 1985: 11). This
could be a valid way to deal with the problems, but a positivistic
method has its own set of limits, most of which pop up, if and when
one tries to apply them to problems they were not made to deal with,
such as theology. Another problem is, that if one wants valid results
from an excursion into the methodology of a different scientific field,
one must—as a minimum—understand the chosen method, and use it
according to the basic rules and maxims of that method.[2]

The basic methods behind the present work, are mostly those of the
scholarly field of history, source criticism and historical criticism.[3]
This is due to a conviction that sources are sources, be they political
or religious documents. Any given source functions as an exponent of
the time in which and for which it was written, just as it functions as
an exponent of the themes and the material it deals with. This is the
case when one deals with political sources and this is likewise the case
when one wants to deal with religious sources and is also applicable
when working with the putative connections between the mythological
and theological material of different cultures. A decisive factor in my
choice of method is that historical method is also a materialistic ap-
proach, dealing with the actually existing material, not with what we
could have had—if only...

Historical method has rarely been used in connection with the mate-
rial discussed in this book. Most examinations drawing on texts from
Israel, Ugarit and the Old Testament seek—by means of philology and
comparative literary analysis—to connect the different cultures[4] or,

2.   As an example of the faulty use of statistics, see section 3.1.1.3.
3.   This should in no way be confused with the traditional theological methods of
historisch-kritischer method and that of *Redaktionsgeschichte* or the like. The method
I attempt to apply is not any of these theological approaches, but, as I wrote, the field
of history (not story). My starting point is *the* classical Danish work on historical
method, Kristian Erslev's book *Historisk teknik* (Historical Technique), originally
from 1911, but still in print. The version referred to here is the reprint of 1987. In
this work Erslev seeks to outline basic ways to approach any given source, in order
to establish the applicability and validity of the source at hand in respect to the subject
one wants to deal with.
4.   Cf. 'Ras Shamra Parallels' (ed. Loren Fischer) or Cross 1973.

from an apologetic and exegetic angle, to deny that any connection could exist (cf. Bernhard 1967 or Lipiński 1980). It is my hope that an initial critical evaluation of the different groups of sources and their internal relations can give us a different basis from which to operate. It is however important to keep in mind that any theory—be it historical or exegetical—concerning a past reality, or any method dealing with this past reality, can—at best—only give us a *re*-construction of this same past, and that any reconstruction can only be seen as fully valid, in as much as it explains all existing remnants of the concrete situation or culture.[5]

As mentioned above, the literature dealing not only with comparative studies like the present, but Old Testament studies as such, seems to be practically devoid of reflections on the theoretical and methodological problems facing the scholar. This is a state of affairs that seems deplorable, particularly since there seems to be no awareness of the scholarly or scientific paradigms from which one operates.[6] If one looks at the literature discussing different groups of texts (like the present study) there seems to be no awareness of the manifold pitfalls that must exist when one discusses materials as relatively far removed from each other—chronologically, geographically and culturally—as is the case here. Everything seems to be treated as if it was on the same level, historically, culturally, geographically and politically. The only difference that seemingly is made is that Israelite and Old Testament texts are usually treated as being monotheistic or monolatrous, and this mono-theism or monolatry is then set up as the norm, whereas all other texts and groups of texts are treated as deviations from this norm.

That the object under examination is far removed from one's own cultural, intellectual and chronological basis, must invite problems. When this is the case, and we have the added complication, that one of the cultures under discussion is to some extent both normative in our

5.   Cf. Clausen 1970: 433. I do not attempt to make this fully valid reconstruction, since this is not a book of history.

6.   The word 'paradigm' is here used in a loose approximation of Kuhn's use of the word. As Christiansen 1990 formulates it: 'A paradigm in the world of scientists and scholars is, loosely put (and it is…necessary to put it loosely), a prevalent sense of what is good and respectable science or scholarship. The ruling paradigm defines what is generally accepted as the norm. Since this prevalent sense of what is right is often unspoken, it is very difficult to change' (my translation of the Danish).

own society, and constitutes a religious basis for another nation's understanding of itself, then the critical distance and desired objectivity, so very necessary for sound scholarly work, becomes practically unobtainable. I am of course referring to the problems one must run into if one is not at all times completely aware of the necessary distinction between the Israel(s) of the Old Testament, the ancient historical reality of Israel (or *Bit Humria*) and the modern state of Israel.[7] It is so very easy to treat any 'Israelite' material, according to one's own—modern—sympathies and antipathies of religious and political character.

This 'local' problem apart, the distance—geographically, culturally or chronologically—between one's own situation and the material one deals with, is a major potential source of errors in the interpretative task, particularly if what one seeks to find is 'The Truth'. When all three factors are far removed from one's own situation—as is the case here—then any examination and discussion of the material invariably tells the reader as much about the author's own time, as it does of the material dealt with.

Any scholarly work is bound to the time in which it was created. It is influenced by the political, social and cultural currents that pertained at the time of its making and it is restricted by unexpressed and undiscussed paradigms in contemporary scholarship as such. In my opinion, it is no coincidence that the fascination with *hieros gamos* and sacred prostitution soared during the late Victorian era, with its fascination with and terror of human sexuality. It was in that era, when sex not only was a dirty word, but was more or less tabooed as a subject, that Sir James G. Frazer wrote *The Golden Bough* and Siegmund Freud proposed his theories concerning infantile sexuality and the influence of suppressed sexuality on the persona.

This link to the time and age of the scholar presenting his or her work is still in operation. It is no coincidence that it is in the 1970s, with a growing feminist movement and a budding understanding of the female half of humanity as being more than gender, sexuality and reproduction, that the goddesses of the various religions become of interest to scholars. Since feminism is no less interesting in the 1990s than it was in the 1970s, the present work is no coincidence, but as

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7.   On the Old Testament and historical Israel(s), see below, section 2.2, the definition of 'Israelite'.

much as anything else, a representation of my bonds to my own time, since it deals, almost exclusively, with goddesses.

The binding to one's own time, for better and for worse, is not only apparent in the choice of subject, but also in the treatment of it. It is more than difficult to extricate oneself from the cultural norms that rule one's own culture and time, and thus Albright is undoubtedly right when he claims that it is impossible to understand the pre-Aristotelian way of thought using post-Aristotelian logic. Unfortunately, he does not address the basic problem in this connection: is it possible to avoid using one's inbred Aristotelian logic?[8] It seems questionable whether one should be better equipped to understand any pre-Aristotelian culture if one tries to deny one's inbred Aristotelian logic; one cannot deny the basic thought-patterns, that are integrated into one's mind, and if one tries, the result might very well be that one's fantasy is let loose, with no holds, on the material at hand. When the Aristotelian problem is used as an excuse to attempt to negate one's own way of thought, the result is, more often than not, entertaining adventures and fairy tales, but rarely sound scholarship. A scholar cannot expect to be able to negate his or her own intellectual and cultural background and schooling, and even if he or she could, there is no guarantee that the thought patterns and paradigms that thus would emerge inside the scholar's head, would be the same as were in operation in the society or culture one wants to discuss. Thus we might as well face our own limitations and give up any attempt to find out with certainty what the material 'really' meant then, since we will never know whether the reality described by us, has any likeness to the reality lived then.[9]

8.   Albright 1968: 106: 'We must always remember that it is not possible to make either the myths or the figures of Canaanite mythology fit into a logical framework.' See also 110: 'The error of those who deny this [that the god is born and dies again, in the same way the vegetation he represents does] in their attempt to apply our post-Aristotelian logic to pre-Aristotelian thought patterns— [is that it is] an attempt which obscures, rather than clarifies these patterns'. Albright is not the only scholar expressing this. For a more modern example see Maier 1986: 195: 'When dealing with the myths, a tendency to over-rationalize must be avoided'.

9.   The only place I know of where we can get a glimpse of a possible pre-Aristotelian way of thought, is in a remarkable study by the Soviet psychologist A.R. Luria. His *Cognitive Development: Its Cultural and Social Foundations* (Luria 1976) is in many ways a unique study. The fieldwork to this study was conducted in 1931-32 in remote areas of the relatively new Soviet Union, and the object was to study

The only practical solution to the problem is to apply one's own way of thinking to the material; in this case, to use one's culturally and scholarly training on the pre-Aristotelian material; not haphazardly, but with as much deliberation as possible. Deliberation is important, since the result should preferably not be an unconscious application of one's own cultural norms to the material. If we go about our work in this way, we do not obtain an objectively 'true' picture of the past reality; what we might obtain is a modern understanding of the ancient material, and the knowledge that our conclusions derive from the material at hand.

cognitive development. The subjects examined are for a good part illiterate people, from remote villages who had never had access to any kind of mass media, or even 'modern culture'. For the understanding of pre-Aristotelian ways of thinking, categorizing, classifying and problem-solving, this book should be an indispensable part of the agenda of anyone working with 'dead cultures' in the pre-Aristotelian period, even if one cannot of a necessity agree with the analyses made on the basis of Soviet ideology.

Chapter 2

DEFINITIONS

Since the present book deals with the central concepts of 'Ugaritic',
'Israelite' and 'Canaanite', it seems appropriate to try to define what is
understood by the use of them, even though any valid or thorough
definition of either of the last named is naturally impossible to reach
in a book whose scope and interest lies in quite another direction.

The three concepts have a number of common features. They are all
adjectives, describing a geographical area. They are often used to de-
note states or nations, and are—at least with regard to Canaanite and
Israelite—also used of ethnic groups. This understanding of the latter
words is closely connected to the use the Old Testament makes of
them. Another common factor is that they all suffer from being under-
stood in a 'modern' way.

The concept of a 'nation' or of a 'national-state' is in itself a modern
concept. It did not arise until after the Congress of Vienna towards the
end of the Napoleonic wars. Thus it seems foolhardy to apply this con-
cept to radically different structures of society, in times far removed
from nineteenth-century Europe. The ancient near Eastern 'state' was
closely connected to the palace and the city. A 'state' was the king, the
city of the king, and the area from which he could collect taxes and
forced labour. Every subject of the king, from the highest and richest
court-official to the lowest slave, was—ideologically speaking—the
slave of the king. The individual probably saw himself or herself as
first and foremost a member of a family or village, and only in a very
secondary way, as being the king's subject. The mental—abstract—
step, from understanding oneself as a subject of the king of Ugarit (or
Jerusalem), to understanding oneself as a Ugarite (or Israelite) was
probably not made, and it is thus highly improbable that 'Ugaritic' or
'Israelite' can be used in the sense that we use 'British' or 'Danish'.[1]

1.   Cf. Clements 1989: 4: '...the model of a "national" history has never been

The borders of a state were not fixed in the way borders are today, they depended solely on which king or prince was able to place soldiers in the area, thus enabling him to tax the population of the disputed areas. This is shown in the knowledge we have from the Amarna letters of many minor conflicts in the Syro-Palestinian area. The most well-known example is probably Rib-Adda, and his constant complaints to Pharaoh, on the subject of Abdi-Aširtah, king of the neighboring area.[2]

2.1. *Ugaritic*[3]

Of the three concepts discussed in this chapter, this is by far the easiest to define, since it originates in the name of a city(-state), whose existence is fairly easy to determine, both geographically and chronologically. When the city-state of Ugarit was at its largest, it seems to have covered something like 5500 km^2. Its natural borders were the Mediterranean to the west and swamps or mountains on the remaining sides (cf. map in Astour 1981).

Chronologically Tell Ras Shamra was more or less continuously occupied from the seventh millennium until the town of Ugarit ceased to exist around 1200 BCE, probably as a result of an earthquake.[4] The period of interest to this book is the period from the middle of the fourteenth century BCE until Ugarit's destruction, since it is from this period we have the tablets with a mythological content, that is, the source-material for Ugaritic religion. For practical reasons, the chronological framework used in this book is fourteenth to the twelfth century BCE. Properly speaking, 'Ugaritic' covers material deriving from or belonging to the city-state of Ugarit, as long as this exists, whether this material has been found in the city-state itself or outside it.

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very satisfactory so far as the treatment of ancient Israel is concerned'. See also Liverani 1974b and 1975, and Lemche 1994.

2.   See for example Liverani 1971 and 1974a, or the Amarna letters themselves.

3.   The following is mainly based on Astour 1981; Kinet 1981: 9-46; *ABD*; *GDB* (forthcoming edition).

4.   Thompson 1992: 219 cites an unpublished dissertation by F.R. Dupont, 'The Late History of Ugarit' (Hebrew Union College, 1987), which argues that the final destruction of Ugarit was due to a number of factors: drought, invasion, famine and earthquake. It was the combination of these factors that led to a decline of the Ugaritic political system, and made the inhabitants unable to rebuild the city after the final disaster—the earthquake—had occurred.

2.2. *Israelite*[5]

In discussing this concept not one, but any number of problems rise, and to touch upon it seems to be to place oneself not on top of, but in the middle of a veritable hornets' nest. Not only are we dealing with the problem of the existence of an Israelite state or people before the Common Era, and the chronological as well as geographical issues surrounding this, we are also dealing with the entire complex of problems surrounding the Old Testament, its value as source material being only one of them, and with the problems surrounding so-called 'biblical archaeology'. A thorough discussion of any of these subjects could fill not only a book, but a library, and thus the following will not be a discussion, or even a short resumé of the present standpoint of scholarship, but only a statement of my own position in this. The object is to try to define a workable concept for use in this book.

The traditional—almost fundamentalist—concept of 'ancient Israel', that more or less accepts the Old Testament presentation of the history of Israel, seems no longer tenable. Since Philip R. Davies wrote his *In Search of Ancient Israel* the understanding of this concept has changed radically, if for no other reason than that 'Israel' in the Old Testament is not one thing, but covers—in the very least—ten different concepts (Davies 1992: 50). That 'ancient Israel' is a chimera, born in the minds of scholars, seems obvious after this.

The present work is based on a prize-essay with the fixed subject of comparing Ugaritic and Israelite religion. The wording of the title bound me to the concept of 'Israelite'. I therefore have been obliged to find a workable definition for the purpose of this book, and as such I am stuck—more or less—with the scholarly fiction of 'Ancient Israel'.[6] Now, if the concept of 'Israelite' is to be based on probable historical fact, or at the very least, is to be related to a period from which we have some archaeological material that might connect the area of Cis-Jordan to the Old Testament concept of an Israelite or Judahite state, then we can go no further back than the ninth century.

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5.   This section is primarily based on Liverani 1980; Lemche 1985; Garbini 1988; Clements 1989; Rogerson 1989; Davies 1992; Thompson 1992.

6.   Likewise, as noted in the introduction, both my discussion of the question, and the dissertation were finished before the appearance of Davies 1992 and Thompson 1992.

At no time before this is there any kind of epigraphic material that gives us any solid historical or religious information, that could—though need not—be connected to the Old Testament stories.[7]

This does not mean that there is no earlier epigraphic material from Cis-Jordan, only that there is no way of connecting this material to the Old Testament stories, or even to any polity mentioned therein, just as there is no way of connecting the so-called 'Solomonic' buildings with any king by the name of Solomon. They may have been built in the period in which the Old Testament places a king by the name of Solomon, but to my knowledge there has been found no kind of inscription to connect these buildings to any king by the name of Solomon (or any other king for that matter). 'Israelite' can therefore be placed no earlier than the ninth century BCE, where there is extra-biblical evidence of the existence of some kind of polity in the Cis-Jordan. For reasons of convenience, I will close my study at approximately 586 BCE. This is the date where the transition from 'Israelite' to 'Jewish' begins, and as such, it seems the appropriate place to end.

The geographical framework for 'Israelite' is another problem, since geography in Antiquity was not the exact science it is today. I have therefore—as may be inferred from the above—chosen to define the 'Israelite' area, as the Cis-Jordan.[8]

2.3. Canaanite[9]

To discuss the terms 'Canaan' and 'Canaanite' in this connection seems irrelevant, since neither of these concepts are discussed in the remainder of the book. However, I include this discussion anyway, since most scholars seem to equate 'Ugaritic' and 'Canaanite'.[10] This is often

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7. I am of course mainly thinking of the Mesha-inscription, that mentions both Omri, Yahweh and Israel; the Black Obelisk of Shalmanassar III, that refers to 'Omri's son, Jehu', and the monolith-inscription concerning the battle at Qarqar, fought in 853 BCE, an event of which the Old Testament knows nothing. Other ninth- and eighth- century inscriptions from Assyria, mentions the state *Bit Ḥumria* and *Samaria*, that must in all probability be seen as equivalents to the state called 'Israel' in the Old Testament.

8. I want to make it absolutely clear that this definition is not one I consider valid any more; it is maintained purely for convenience.

9. The following is a *very* short version of the discussion concerning this concept. For a thorough evaluation and discussion, see Lemche 1991.

10. Among the multitude, it will suffice to mention one, Cross 1973 (*Canaanite*

the case when scholars whose original field of interest was the Old Testament enter the field of Ugarit and Ugaritic. Thus, a discussion of what can—with due cause—be called Canaanite, and what cannot, seems to be necessary.

As was the case with the word 'Israelite', it is important to keep in mind that the modern, scholarly as well as popular, use of the concept, derives mainly from the use of the word in the Old Testament. When one looks into the use of the concept outside the Old Testament, a different picture emerges.

It seems that the extra-biblical material uses the concept far more loosely and unspecifically than does the Old Testament. The most common use of the word is to designate lands, areas and people, situated in the eastern part of the Mediterranean, the main locality being the Syro-Palestinian area.[11] If this were to be translated into a more modern concept, then 'The Levant' or even 'The Middle-East' could be helpful. These concepts have in common that they are rather elastic and could cover anything from the territories bordered by the Mediterranean in the west to the Arabian Sea in the east, sometimes including not only Egypt, but Libya and Turkey as well. It is within this area, that 'Canaan' lies. If one then looks closer, 'Canaanite' seems to be used only of 'the others', and never of the person writing. They seem to be people who do not belong to the writer's own 'nation', but who are, on the other hand, not barbarians.[12]

The Old Testament understanding seems much more specific and polemical. According to Lemche (Lemche 1991: 151-73) 'the land of Canaan' is identical to 'our land' in the minds of the authors and redactors of the so-called historical books of the Old Testament. 'Canaanite' seems to be the highly polemical name that the post-exilic Jews gave to the non-Jewish, or just 'not Jewish enough' inhabitants of the land they returned to.[13] Alternatively, one could read the terms as

Myth and Hebrew Epic), which is mainly a discussion of the Ugaritic mythological texts in relation to the Old Testament.

11. Cf. Helck 1962: 279-80: 'In den Amarna Briefen ist *Kinaḫḫi, Kinaḫni, Kinaḫna* deutlich eine allgemeine Bezeichnung für alle syrisch-palästinenischen Gebiete.'

12. Cf. Lemche 1991: 52: 'To the scribe of ancient Western Asia "Canaanite" always designated a person who did not belong to the scribe's own society or state, while Canaan was considered to be a country different from his own.'

13. Lemche 1991: 167. In order to make this thesis stick, one has to accept

polemical designations for those parts of the population—be they 'Israelites' or Jews or not—who do not accept the rigid demands of the deuteronomists, concerning one central, Jerusalemite cult and the adherence to only one God.

Lemche's dating of the Pentateuch and the Deuteronomists, to the fifth or fourth century at the earliest.

Chapter 3

THE SOURCE MATERIAL

This chapter will deal with a general evaluation of the sources that are the backbone of the present work. Since I am dealing almost exclusively with the textual sources, these will be the ones evaluated.

The purpose of a historical criticism of the sources is to determine the applicability of the sources to the problem at hand.[1] The way to do it is to make a survey of their contents, their history of transmission (when relevant) and their physical condition. With regard to contents, it is impossible to give an evaluation before one has been through the material at least once. I will nevertheless attempt a preliminary evaluation of the texts discussed here: the Old Testament, the Ugaritic corpus of texts and the other archaeologically found epigraphic material that does not belong in either of these two main categories. If the initial evaluation of these sources should prove to be wrong, it will be revised during the more elaborate discussion of their content in the following chapters.[2]

3.1. Archaeological Findings

The first group of texts are the ones that have been found during excavations. They are thus subject to the laws of chance, in as much as both what survives during the the centuries, and what is dug up and thus brought to light is accidental. Among the archaeologically found material, the corpus of texts from Ugarit is my primary interest, but epigraphic material from 'Israel' will also be evaluated in the follow-

1. So Clausen 1970: 436: 'at afgøre kildens anvendelighed til at begrunde svar på det problem...[man] arbejder med'; that is, 'to determine the efficacy of the source with regards to substantiating an answer to the problem...[one] is working on'.
2. The terminology used in this chapter is mainly borrowed from Clausen 1970 and Erslev 1987.

ing, just as the issue of the Old Testament as source material in this connection will be looked into: that is, the question of its relevance to 'Israelite' religion in the period c. 900 to 586 BCE.

3.1.1. *Frequent Sources of Error in the Archaeological Material*
The extra-biblical material has a number of common potential errors and problems that may seem too self-evident to state or discuss. This will nevertheless be done in the following, as these sources of error are often behind major points of dissension in the scholarly debate.

3.1.1.1. *Misspelling*. Whereas the biblical material has undergone a number of redactions that have—in part at least—sought to find some kind of uniform orthography, one cannot expect the same to be the case with the extra-biblical material.

There was no kind of authority, no official 'Scrabble Dictionary', in the Ugaritic or 'Israelite' societies BCE. This might seem too banal to mention, but it is not without importance, particularly since the interpretation of a text often hangs on the interpretation of one word or even on the reading of one letter. It is important to decide whether one considers the scribe who originally wrote a tablet to have been dyslexic, sloppy or perfect.[3]

One must presume that the individual scribe used his own—more or less standard—orthography throughout; one has to presume that, for instance, *ilmlk* of Ugarit was consistent in his spelling of individual words. One cannot, however, assume that other scribes spelled the individual words the same way *ilmlk* did.

This could be highlighted by a look at Akkadian. As the *lingua franca* of the ancient Near East in the Bronze Age and the beginning of the Iron Age, Akkadian seems to have been subject to large orthographical differences. Since this language uses syllabic writing, most words can be spelled in a number of different ways, and one gets the suspicion that orthography depended on many things, two of them being how large the tablet was, and how learned the scribe wanted to appear. Another decisive factor with regard to orthography seems to

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3.   A number of word-lists have been found in Ugarit, but they have the character of glossaries rather than dictionaries. Their purpose seemingly, was to provide translations of various Ugaritic words into other languages, rather than to establish either the meaning or the correct spelling of any given word in Ugaritic. For this reason, they are without any major importance in this connection.

have been the individual scribe's own language, and even dialect. This can be seen in the Amarna letters, where the dialect and mother-tongue of the scribe seems to have had a major influence on the Akkadian he wrote (see for example, Liverani 1983).

If just one of these factors—the one of dialect—was similar through-out the ancient Near East, then we are not necessarily dealing with sloppy writing when we encounter orthographic variances; we might be dealing with dialect within the language.

Naturally, one should not rule out cases of misspelling entirely. Even a highly skilled scribe could forget a wedge, write the wrong letter or forget a line when copying. An obvious example of a scribal error is found in *PRU* II.3 = *KTU* 1.83. Line 8 of this text starts with the word *tan*. Seen in context, it becomes obvious that the proper word to read is *tnn*. The difference between the two is one single wedge: *a* is written with two consecutive wedges, *n* with three, and it is not un-usual to see an *n* written with four wedges. This implies that it was fairly easy to mistake certain letters. Another example could be *KTU* 1.16.III.4, which has *miyt*, but the word gives no meaning. When one deletes a single wedge in the second letter, the word becomes *mhyt*, which fits the context perfectly; both *CTA* and *KTU* emend thus.

Misspelling as a source of errors in a given text is thus a genuine possibility, but one should only assume it to be the case with great hesitancy, thus avoiding what could be called the scourge of Ugarit scholarship: emendations of texts and reconstructions of lacuna. It is not unusual to encounter scholars whose arguments are based on what is hidden in a lacuna—and reconstructed by the scholar—or who build their arguments on elaborate emendations, claiming misspellings and faulty grammar on the part of the ancient scribe.[4]

3.1.1.2. *State of Preservation.* Another common source of error in the interpretation of ancient, archaeologically found, texts, is their state of preservation. If one looks at clay tablets, not only from Ugarit, but from the entire Near East, one sees great variances in their present condition. Most of the tablets are fragmentary, their surface has cor-roded, breaks and holes are seen on the tablets and the edges are, more often than not, damaged. Just one of these factors can seriously

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4.   A possible example of this can be found in Margalit 1989. He simply omits half a line in the inscription from Khirbet el-Qom and inserts another (wholly recon-structed) one, which he considers more fitting for the context. See also section 5.1.

disturb our understanding of the text at hand, and in combination they can make correct interpretation impossible. The next serious problem occurs when one attempts to put pieces together. Finding out which fragment belongs where can keep scholars occupied for decades.[5]

The original state of the material used for an inscription can likewise give rise to problems. A textbook example is the inscription from Khirbet el-Qom, which has for at least a decade given rise to what at times has been heated scholarly debate.[6] And if we are dealing with wall-plaster that has fallen off the walls and lies, in pieces or as dust, the problems grow even further, as can be witnessed with one of the texts from Kuntillet Ajrud,[7] or with the texts from Deir Alla.

3.1.1.3. *Onomastica.* Since extra-biblical texts pertaining to issues in the Old Testament are scarce, the discussion of onomastica has for a long time been in the foreground when one wanted to learn something of the religious feelings and affiliations of the 'common person'[8] in any given culture, but the issue is not as clear-cut as it seems. If one wants to deal with onomastica as a (historical) source or even as religious source material, one has to tackle a number of fundamental methodological issues—something that is rarely done. I do not pretend to cover all major issues in this section, but I do attempt to touch upon a number of them, all necessary for our evaluation of this possible source.

The first major point is the illusion that only theophoric names are relevant. This is not the case. If one wants to deal with the implications hidden in the name-material of a given culture, one has to assess the entire material, and not just the part of the material that gives clear-cut and easily recognizable divine names, or—even worse—the part of the material that tells one what one wants to hear. Divine epithets can be used as theophoric elements in personal names, as well as being used instead of the more regular divine names. If part of the onomastic material is without any kind of divine name or epithet, then this too can tell us about the value of theophoric personal names.[9]

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5.   As has been the case with the Dead Sea Scrolls.
6.   See section 5.1.
7.   See section 5.2 and Appendix 2.
8.   Tigay 1986: ix, 'personal names are a reflex of religious loyalties'.
9.   See below, the evaluation of Tigay 1986.

Only the complete material available can give us any kind of useable information.

Likewise, one has to keep in mind that a theophoric name might be meaningful when it is first given, but its meaning may be lost during the course of time.[10] It is impossible to determine with any certainty when (or if) a name is meaningful to the person giving the name, and when it is simply given out of tradition, or because the giver likes the name. The only certain information that can be learned from theophoric personal names is that they in all probability *derive* from a culture whose ideas of religion were basically polytheistic, since the 'original' giver of a name has felt it necessary to provide the named person with some divine affiliation. They tell us nothing at all of which we can be certain pertaining to the culture in which they are used.

Another factor is the problem of what the theophoric element of a name means. A divinity can have a name in common with another divinity in a neighboring culture, but not have the same functions, just as gods can have the same functions but not share a name. This is not only the case in different cultures, but can be the case in the same culture at different times. The names of gods can change over the years but they may nevertheless maintain the same divine functions, or the names of gods can be retained while the divine functions change. One of the examples of 'different names, but same god' is the possible equation between Baal-Hammon of Carthage, and El, two well-known divine names that appear to cover the 'same' god in two different—but comparable—cultures (so Cross, *ThWAT*, I, pp. 265-70).

Yet another factor of uncertainty is the fact that seals, bullae and inscriptions are not made for the 'common person'. Only the wealthier classes could afford the kind of signature a seal or inscription gives, so that only graffiti can have any chance of giving us a more democratic picture; but this still excludes that (major) part of the population that is unable to read or write.

Finally one has to work within well-defined frameworks, chronologically as well as geographically speaking. It is not sufficient to say 'Ugaritic', if what one means is 'the city-state of Ugarit, as it was in

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10. Thus, it is not uncommon in Denmark to baptize a child Freja, which is the name of the Asa-goddess of fertility. Another popular Danish name, Torben (which derives from Thor-bjørn, 'the bear of Thor'), has been a popular Danish name for more than a millennium. That a priest (or minister) is called Torben does not necessarily make the man a pagan, either in the tenth century, or in the twentieth century.

the period from 1400–1200 BCE'. One also has to define how one proposes to determine which names are 'properly' Ugaritic and which are 'imported'.

In an attempt to look more closely into the methodology and results that the study of onomastica can give us, the following will be a close look at one of the more recent onomastic studies, Jeffrey H. Tigay's *You Shall Have no Other Gods*.[11] Tigay has been chosen for several reasons: one is that he claims to work with the entire 'Israelite' onomastic material; another is that he seems to be a good representative of the many scholars who try to use more 'hard science' methods in the field of Old Testament studies.[12]

The onomastic material compiled and treated by Tigay seems impressive, but also shows the dangers involved in reducing material that does not consist of numbers to numbers or to 'statistics': a danger not only present when one tries to apply statistics to Old Testament material, but is a constant factor in all statistics.[13]

In the introduction, Tigay claims that 'It is to the onomastic and inscriptional data and their bearing on the Biblical evidence that the present study is devoted' (Tigay 1986: 3) and the subtitle of the book is *Israelite Religion in the Light of Hebrew Inscriptions*. Thus it seems clear that it is not the complete archaeologically found material that he discusses, but only part of it. Unfortunately, Tigay forgets to tell the reader which part of the material he discards, and why. The title implies that he is dealing with Hebrew inscriptions only, but he sets no geographical or chronological framework, he does not propose any method for telling the Hebrew and non-Hebrew names apart, just as he at no time discusses the problem of ethnicity.

Among the names he discards are *'bdlb't* and *bn'nt*, both found on arrow-heads outside Bethlehem; they are 'too early' and 'Canaanite' (Tigay 1986: 13 n. 41 and Cross 1981), but the reader has not been

11. Tigay 1986. I have chosen to work only with the sections pertaining to the onomastic material in this book. The conclusions drawn from the 'ordinary' epigraphical material will not be discussed here.

12. The discussion of Tigay's book could equally have been placed in section 1, that discusses method. It has been placed here because it has been an important factor in the formation of my views on onomastica as a (historical) source.

13. It is Tigay who claims that he treats the material 'statistically'. He does not. What he does is to make a percentual distribution of names, based on principles only dimly illuminated. However, it takes more than percentages to make statistics.

given any chronological frame! He mentions that the majority of the material is from the eighth century and later, and he states that it is the pre-exilic names that have his interest, but no lower boundary is set, and the upper one (586 BCE) is only inferred. Likewise, he gives no indication as to how one decides whether an inscription is 'Israel-ite' (Hebrew) or 'Canaanite'. The distinction is (cf. Chapter 2 of this book) not obvious, even if Tigay wants it to appear so. There is no rea-son whatsoever to suppose that only the bits and pieces that agree with the Old Testament picture of the correct 'Israelite' cult is 'Israelite', whereas the uncomfortable and polytheistic evidence is 'Canaanite'.[14]

Names discarded out of chronological or ethnic considerations, that are not stated, are thus an unknown number. Tigay does not give any number, and he does not list the names in his appendices.

Another part of the onomastic material that Tigay discards is that which uses El as the theophoric element, since he—correctly—finds that it is impossible to determine which god is hiding behind the name. It could be Yahweh, or it could be some other god. Discarding names on the basis that one cannot determine which god is hiding behind a name is not—statistically, scientifically or scholarly speaking—a sound practice. In order to make sound statistics, he should include the 77 El-names, either as an 'El-category' or an 'unknown-category' in the final analysis. That way, the names would not disappear, and a more correct picture would be gained.

Eighty-seven names, listed in Tigay's appendix C, are not seen as 'Israelite pagan names'. We are given no reasons for these names not being 'Israelite', and are only told, that hypocristic names of this type are so rare that it is improbable that all 87 should be what they appear to be. When one turns to the appendix, to see which names are not 'Israelite pagan names', it seems puzzling—to say the least—that he reads the name *šlm[h]* as Shalim, rather than Solomon, and that this name (of all) is not judged to be 'Israelite'. Unfortunately Tigay does

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14. I am perfectly aware that a large number of scholars equate 'Canaanite' with Bronze Age and 'Israelite' with Iron Age, but the boundaries are not self-evident, just as the dating of the transition from the Bronze Age to the Iron Age is something that is widely discussed. Another example of this unclear distinction, presented as very clear, is found in Tadmor 1982. She 'dates' female cult-figurines as 'Canaan-ite', in distinction to 'Israelite', which does not know of cult-figurines of this sort. Her argumentation is—in its principles—circular.

not divulge why he evaluates the way he does.

The remaining—numbered—names are 35 'plausibly pagan' names and 557 Yahwistic names. Thus the material discussed reaches a total of 756 names (77 El-names + 87 'non-Israelite' names + 35 'pagan' names + 557 Yahweh-names). Tigay's evaluation of the remainder of the material, apart from the 557 Yahwistic names and the 77 El-names, is that most of the rest mention no deity at all.[15] Two questions fairly leap at me: 'Not even epithets?'[16] and 'How many "other names" are we dealing with?' Unfortunately, I am unable to give any kind of answer. Tigay does not list the remaining names, nor does he give us the sum of them, the only information found in the book is that: 'the names of more than 1200 pre-exilic Israelites are known from Hebrew inscriptions and foreign inscriptions referring to Israel' (Tigay 1986: 9). Presumably, then, the 'other names' include more than 444 persons.

This, then, is the material Tigay uses to show that 94.1 per cent of the 'Israelite' names are Yahwistic, while only 5.9 per cent are non-yahwistic (Tigay 1986: 15). Now, if one disregards Tigay's misuse of statistics—both the word and the method—and tries to compile a percentual distribution, based on the information gleaned from Tigay's study, the result might look something like this:

		%
yhw-names	502	41.8
yh-names	40	3.3
Dubious Yahweh-names	15	1.3
El-names	77	6.4
Other theophoric names	122	10.2
Unknown	444	37.0
Total	1200	100.0

The Yahweh-names are split into three categories: (1) the *Yhw*-compounds; (2) *Yh*- compounds; and (3) damaged names and the ambiguous *Yw*- compounds which might refer to some other deity.[17]

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15. Tigay 1986: 12: 'Of all the remaining names, most mention no deity at all. Only 35 seem clearly or very plausibly to refer to deities other than YHWH.'

16. For an evaluation and discussion of names compounded with divine epithets rather than divine names, see, for example, Thompson 1974: 22-51.

17. They could be referring to the Ugaritic god *yw* (cf. *CTA* 1.IV.14 : 'the name of my son is *yw*'), or to some other god, bearing the same name.

Tigay's two groups of 'certain' and 'improbable' theophoric names, bearing the name of a 'pagan' god, are grouped together for convenience, but the 'El-names' get their own category, since they could or could not be referring to Yahweh. The final category, 'unknown' seems huge, but is simply a low estimate of the unlisted and unnumbered names necessary to reach the total of 1200. As will be remembered, Tigay claims that we know the names of 'more than 1,200' 'Israelites' from before 586 BCE.[18]

Tigay's conclusions derive from the faulty use of his chosen method. He claims that 94.1 per cent of the material is Yahwistic. It is not. It is not even 94.1 per cent of the listed theophoric material that is Yahwistic. If we take our point of departure in the above percentual spread, rather than in Tigay's, 46.4 per cent, at the most, of the material can be viewed as Yahwist.[19] If Tigay had stated his object more clearly, and had insisted throughout that only the theophoric material was relevant, then the Yahwist-names would have reached a total of 73.7 per cent.[20] This is a stunning figure in itself. However, it leads us back to the central issue of method: to use non-theological methods in an attempt to gain new insights is laudable; to try to give one's work an aura of empiricism by misuse of hard science methods of a positivist derivation, is not.

A related issue to this is the fact that I disagree with Tigay in the basic concept that only theophoric names can tell us something of the religious loyalties in a society or culture. A lot can be learned from the fact that some names carry no theophoric element—be it a divine name or a divine epithet. If a major part of the extant onomasticon has no divine connotation at all, this tells us that a major part of that level of the population which could read and write or which had a seal of some kind, did not consider a theophoric name a necessity. This again leads back to the basic assumption, that names are a valid source for the history (of religion) of a given area. If as many as 37 per cent of the names are non-theophoric, this could indicate that names were not

18. The present book is not an onomastic study, and since Tigay does not list these names, or even tell us specifically where to find them, it is impossible to evaluate whether any of these 'more than' 444 names contain some divine epithet or not.

19. If one evaluates the Yahweh-names less kindly, their share goes down to 41.8 per cent.

20. I am here including both the El-names and the dubious 'pagan' names listed in Tigay's study.

of a necessity given for religious reasons, but could—just as well—be given because they were 'nice' or 'traditional'.

To round up this evaluation, it is worth noting, as a final irony, that Tigay's own figures give the lie to the so-called historical books of the Old Testament. If 94.1 per cent of the 'Hebrew' population in the period up to 586 BCE were pious Yahwists, the 'foreign cult' over which 2 Kings agonizes becomes a minimal problem and not—as it is presented in the biblical text—something 'all Israel' was doing more or less continuously.[21]

If we then turn from the specific to the general, from Tigay's study to the problems of onomastica as such, we can look briefly at the problem of the divine element *yw/yh/yhw*. If a name with this divine element is found in the area of 'ancient Israel', it will automatically be evaluated as being Yahwist, but what of names from 'non-Israelite' periods, such as the Bronze Age, or from a different cultural context than the 'Israelite': are they Yahwist as well?

The first example is from an Akkadian text found in Ugarit, RS 8.208.[22] The interesting thing in this connection is the name of the woman, whose manumission is described here. She is called *ᶠeli̯-ia̯-wa*.[23] Had this name been found in an 'Israelite' context, the self-evident translation would be 'my god is Yahweh'. Another example of something that could be a Yahwist name, in a 'wrong' context, is found in a treaty between Ḥattušilis III, king of Ḥatti, and Bentešina, king of Amurru (*PDK*, text no. 9 1.19-20 [pp. 128-29]) which runs, 'I have given the daughter of the king, Gašullijaue (*ᶠga-áš-šù-li-ja-ù-i-e*), to the land of Amurru, to the house of king Bentešina, in marriage'.

Since neither of these texts come from 'Israel', we can choose to believe—at least with regards to the Ugaritic name—that the theophoric element is not Yahweh, but rather the god Yaw mentioned above,[24] or we could follow Gröndahl, and read an Egyptian divine

21. I owe this observation to a conversation with N.P. Lemche.

22. The initial 12 lines of the tablet are given in transcribed Akkadian in *PRU* III.1 pp. 110-11. The entire text is found in translation in *ANET*, p. 546.

23. Gröndahl 1967: 324 reads *ᶠe-li-ia-ya*, and considers that the name contains the double-suffix of *yy*, and that the divinity that the name refers to is the alphabetical *ilyy*, an Egyptian divinity.

24. Cf. section 3.1.1.1. Even though 'w' and 'm' look relatively alike in the Latin alphabet, it seems improbable that a Ugaritic scribe should mistake these letters,

name in the compound. We could also, with equal justification, see not only the Ugaritic, but also the Hittite name, as a reference to a divinity, bearing the name of Yahweh or Yaw in the north of the Syrian-Palestinian area, in the Bronze Age.[25] This, then, together with the Hamath-material from the eighth century discussed in Dalley's article, opens up an entire new set of possibilities. If Yahweh is not—as is usually presumed—an exclusive 'Israelite' name, bound to the Iron Age 'Israelite' population of Cis-Jordan, then the Yahweh-epithet in any given PN loses its value as a significant factor with regard to ethnic affiliation, just as it loses its significance as a pointer to any kind of biblical monotheism or even monolatrous Yahweh-cult. Yahweh, in both the Bronze Age and early Iron Age, becomes just another god of the Syrian-Palestinian area.[26]

In conclusion to this discussion of onomastica, many factors argue in favor of regarding onomastica as a very dubious source, particularly when dealing with the religious affiliations of a given society. Not only because there is a tendency to read our own—often fragmented—knowledge of a given pantheon into the names, but also because ostraca, bullae and tomb-inscriptions are the prerogatives of a very minor part of any ancient society. For these reasons, onomastica will be disregarded as a valid source in this book.

3.1.2. *The Epigraphic Material from Ugarit*
The epigraphic material from Ugarit has its own set of specific problems that will be dealt with below. The first is the problem of sequence and coherence in—at least—one of the major text-series, or cycles from Ugarit, namely the so-called Baal-cycle. The second specific problem of the Ugaritic texts is their function, and why were they written and preserved.

3.1.2.1. *The Problems of Fundorte.*[27] It is a constant practice in all discussions of ancient texts and archaeological findings to complain

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and thus write *yw*, when the divinity he intended to refer to was *ym*.

25. For the possible use of the divine name Yahweh outside 'Israel', see also Dalley 1990.

26. As a final reference to Tigay's study, it is worth noting that if this is the case, then not even the divine name *yw/yh/yhw* in a given personal name need refer to the god of the Old Testament.

27. The following is a very short summary of a small portion of my present

about the lack of official excavation reports. When one looks at the Ugaritic material, the lack of aggregate reports—in the absence of a final set of reports—is highlighted by the fact that the majority of the tablets found, have been published more or less continuously. Nowhere does the lack of an official report seem more obvious than when we are dealing with the tablets that contain the so-called Baal-cycle. This is the case, because one of the major discussions in the study of Ugaritic myths, is the proper sequence of the six tablets (*CTA* 1–6) that make up the so-called Baal-cycle. The entire discussion should be reconsidered, as a direct result of Allan Rosengren Petersen's study of where Schaeffer actually found the tablets (Petersen 1994). This is a piece of work that should have been done by the official excavators long ago, but has not been done.

Petersen's examination shows that the tablets of the so-called Baal-cycle should properly be separated, since two of them—*CTA* 1 and 2—were found not only during a different season of excavation from the rest, but in a different room. This seems to indicate that the tablets were not—as hitherto assumed—part of the same cycle, but rather, separate poems.[28]

It has been notoriously difficult to fit the stories of Baal's fight(s) against Yam, and his controversies with Mot, into the same framework without distorting the texts. If *CTA* 1–2 contains a different story from *CTA* 3–6, we do not need to fit them into a common framework, but can see the entire set of stories—that is, the fight(s) between Baal and Yam, the story of his controversies with Mot, and the story of the building of his palace—as separate entities. Since both the facts concerning the finding of the tablets, and the contents of the separate text-groups support regarding the poems as separate entities, it might be more appropriate to talk of a number of poems, all dealing with the god Baal, and—perhaps—presenting different explanations for his ascent to power. I will therefore in the following refer to the 'Baal-texts', rather than the 'Baal-cycle'.

Another interesting observation that can be gleaned from Petersen's study is the fact that some of the Baal-texts, *CTA* 3–6, were in the same room as the so-called epic texts, that is, the Poem of Aqhat, or

research. I did, however, find it essential to include the argument in curtailed form since its ramifications are fundamental.

   28. This conclusion is one I draw from Petersen's article.

Danel, and the Poem of Kirta. They were not, however, stored in the same room as the ritual-texts found in the same building. It thus seems justifiable to assume that the Baal-texts should be considered in the same light as the other epic texts, rather than be seen as a set of texts used in the cult.[29]

3.1.2.2. *Why Were the Texts Written?* If, as proposed above, the Baal-texts should be seen as literature, rather than ritual texts or even as a script for the 'Akitu' festival of Ugarit, we have not really come any closer to defining why they were written at all. We use them as source material for discussions of the religion and pantheon of Ugarit, but since we do not know anything of the context they have been written for or in, we are—unfortunately—no closer to a determination of what they are.

When we look at lists of sacrifices, we have a more than shrewd idea that they were indeed used in the practical cult of Ugarit, but the reasons for the existence of the epic texts still elude us. We know the name of the author, or scribe; he is *'ilmlk*, and is seemingly an official at the court of king Niqmaddu. With the help of the colophons he has written on the tablets, these texts can be dated to the period between 1325 and 1250 BCE (cf. Loretz 1990: 6), but that is about as far as we can get. Nothing in the texts themselves gives away their purpose, apart from the one fact, that we can—with relative certainty—assume that they should be read—or sung—aloud.[30] The epic texts could be 'ordinary' literature, examples of a single man's itch to write, or they could be confiscated or appropriated material, reflecting a 'heretic' version of the Ugaritic religion. The texts could also represent 'edifying' texts, used by the upper class of Ugarit, or 'edifying' texts, used as bait for the common people, in order to teach them something of the proper religious feelings, just as they could be texts used by certain religious 'clubs' or cultic associations. We do not know, and the list of possible explanations seem endless.

If the epic texts are correlated with the obviously cultic texts, we can get a picture of whether the epic texts had any connection to the daily cult, something that does not seem very probable;[31] but even if

29. Again, the conclusion is mine, based on Petersen's study.

30. We know this from the occurrences of double lines, between which instructions like 'repeat from...', are found; thus *CTA* 4.V.104-105.

31. The agreement with regards to the names used in the different categories of

this is the case, we have no idea why the epic texts were written at all.

3.1.3. *Epigraphic Material from the 'Israelite' Area*

When one wants to deal with archaeological material from the Israelite area, in particular the epigraphic part of it, one stumbles upon a number of problems that are only partly related to the material itself. A major part of the problems with epigraphic findings is the treatment they get in publication...if, that is, the material is published within something resembling a sensible time-frame.

Unfortunately, much of the secondary literature concerning archaeology in the 'Israelite' area, is characterized by what appears to be a need to prove the 'truth' of the Old Testament via archaeology.[32] This may be understandable when the author is a pious person, with a more or less fundamentalist approach to anything found in 'the Holy Land'. It is not, however, very sound scholarship. If one feels obliged to press any find into an Old Testament frame, then the object—which in itself is not 'contaminated' by being anything but itself—becomes an ideological tool, wielded in the fight between 'biblicists' and 'agnostics'.

As long as complete reports of any excavation, and of its finds are not published as quickly as at all possible, then the preliminary publication of single items can become suspect, as they are not published within their proper framework. The items published and described might have been chosen for publication for the simple reason that they support the excavators personal beliefs, rather than because they are central and important finds.

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texts, seems to be reasonably large. It is relatively few gods that are only known to us from one group of texts. The disagreement between the text-groups does, however, seem to be relatively great when we are dealing with the importance of the individual gods. A goddess like Anat, who is of major importance, both in the Baal-texts and in the poem of Aqhat, seems only to have been of minor cultic importance, since her name only rarely occurs in lists of sacrifices. (I am naturally drawing my conclusions on the basis of the extant material, not on what might exist or might have existed 'if only...')

32. A shining example of this could be the newly found stela-fragments from Tel Dan. The excavators have—laudably—published these fragments very quickly, but the treatment of the material seems to be biblicistic to an extent that borders on fundamentalism; so, the interpretation of a word ending in *-ihw* as being the name of an 'Israelite' king (cf. Naveh and Biran 1993). A multitude of names—'Israelite' and non-'Israelite'—can end in *-ihw*: it is not a theophoric element exclusive to kings mentioned in the Old Testament; cf. Dalley 1990.

Thus it is a dubious practice to concentrate on which person from the Old Testament could have used this or that installation or item, for which purpose,[33] rather than concentrating on placing the item or installation in the extant archaeological framework, and only—as a much later step—looking into whether this new information could have any bearing on the Old Testament. Unless the context of a given object irrevocably and indisputably refers it to something we know of from the Old Testament, it seems highly suspect to start one's search for context in the Old Testament, rather than in the other material finds.

The same is true of epigraphic material. Unless it is clear from the text itself that it refers to one or more persons or events known to us from the Old Testament it is not—as I understand the concept—sound scholarship to reconstruct or insist on a connection that is not in the text itself.

Finally, it is worth noting that the epigraphic material from the 'Israelite' area is scant in comparison to that from the neighbouring areas and cultures. Apart from the inscription in the Siloam tunnel, there are no royal or official inscriptions from the Israelite area,[34] there are no votive-inscriptions, no founder-inscriptions, no annalistic reports: in short, no inscriptions of official character.[35]

3.2. *The Old Testament*

One of the greatest problems connected with the use of the Old Testament as a historical source is that it is a collection of literature that is not historiography, but rather a work whose scope and focus is

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33. The outstanding example of this is the magazine *Biblical Archaeological Review*, which spends most of its editorial space on speculation about 'Joshua's altar on mount Ebal' or King David's shoelaces or the like.

34. I do not regard the Mesha inscription and the newly-found inscription fragments from Tell Dan as official 'Israelite' royal inscriptions.

35. Garbini (1988: 17-19) notes an interesting hypothesis in this connection. He refers to one of the earliest rabbinical texts, the *Megillat Ta'anit*, where a Jewish festival on the 3rd of Tishri is mentioned. On this day the time when 'the memory of the documents were eliminated' was commemorated. This short notice, in combination with the lack of inscriptions, leads Garbini to speculate on whether official Judaism destroyed every inscription that was not in accordance with the official, sacred history—that is, did not support the Old Testament.

ideology and religion.[36] The 'historiography' of the Old Testament is built on a religious understanding of the world and the individual that is static: Yahweh is, and has always been, the one true god; other gods are false, and any cult, for any other god than Yahweh, any other place than the one he has determined, is fornication, heresy and apostasy.

This religious understanding of the world and of the individual is projected into practically every 'historical' book or pericope of the collection, just as it is projected into the prehistory. The prehistory—created on the basis of the present[37] religious ideology—is then made into the ideal 'golden' age, legitimizing the present demands and ideologies.

To see prehistory as being on the same ethical and religious level as the present, leads to a very static view of history. No real development can take place if everything has always been so and only minor fluctuations within the framework of the fixed ideology and religion can be allowed.

Thus, the historiography of the Old Testament should in no way be seen as an attempt to give correct answers—to 'tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth'—but should rather be seen as religiously determined attempts at fitting the past into a pattern—or even creating a past—that suits the present ideology. The Old Testament is an excellent source for the period in which it was written and compiled, the only problem being the question of when it was?[38] It is not a very good source, actually it is at most times a very bad source for events and thoughts of the periods it pretends to deal with.

Even when we have parallel sources to persons, events or traditions treated in the Old Testament, these do not necessarily tell us anything of the Old Testament text, its age or its origin. The Deir 'Alla finds are an excellent illustration of this. From these we can see that a tradition of some prophet, by the name of *bl'm* son of *b'wr*, was

36. I do not pretend even to touch upon any major discussions of the historiography of the Old Testament. For a comprehensive survey and brilliant discussion of the issue, see Flemming Nielsen's forthcoming study, *Tragedy in History*, which is to be published in Sheffield's Copenhagen International Seminar.

37. 'Present' in this context means the present time of the biblical writers and redactors, not our present.

38. I will not deal with this issue in this book, as it is far, far beyond the scope of the present study. Suffice to say, I belong to the 'school' that dates most—if not all—of the Old Testament after 586 BCE.

known in Transjordan in the seventh century. We know a prophet of the same name from Numbers 22–24, and could thus be dealing with an authentic seventh century tradition. But the Balaam tradition—*if* we are dealing with the same tradition—could have come into the Old Testament at any time after the seventh century: all that the findings can tell us is that a tradition about Balaam son of Beor was known in the seventh century, no more, no less.[39]

We cannot expect the Old Testament to be a genuine and informative source to the history of religion in pre-exilic 'Israel'. If we insist on using it anyway, we must simultaneously insist that it is only in cases where extra-biblical material has given us a feasible idea of the situation that the Old Testament can be brought in as a supplement. By this I do not wish to imply that one should try to make archaeologically found material fit into the Old Testament framework, but the contrary. Even if it is almost inhuman to expect a biblical scholar to disregard the biblical implications, it is of major importance—if one wants to work from a historical angle—to start with the extra-biblical material, and only, as the very last step in an investigation, to try and trace the results in the text of the Old Testament.

39. For a different evaluation of these findings in relation to the Old Testament version, see J.C. de Moor 1990.

Chapter 4

ASHERAH IN UGARIT

4.1. *The Mythological and Epic Texts*[1]

In the present chapter I will discuss the different titles and epithets given to Asherah in the mythological and epic texts from Ugarit. Asherah's role(s) and function(s) in the texts or text-groups, including her status as it can be deduced from the lists of sacrifices, will be examined in an attempt to determine a more precise estimate of her position and importance in the Ugaritic religion and pantheon.

4.1.1. *The Names and Titles of Asherah*[2]
When one tries to grasp who Asherah was both in the Ugaritic texts and in the minds of the people using these texts, the discussion often starts with one or more of the titles and epithets given to her. I too will take as my starting point the different names, titles and epithets given to her in the texts, or claimed to be hers by other scholars, in order to examine whether any knowledge of her role(s) and function(s) can be deduced from these.

4.1.1.1. *rbt aṯrt ym.* This title occurs a total of nineteen times in the Ugaritic texts.[3] Six of these parallel with *qnyt ilm* and it appears four

1.   The texts dealt with are all the extant texts using the word *aṯrt* that I have been able to find—in practice this means the texts listed by Whitaker. All texts are transcribed from the autograph in *CTU* and have been translated by the present author. Deviations from the standard text-versions—*CTA, KTU* and *UT*—are recorded in the notes on each text.
2.   This chapter does *not* discuss the meaning of the word *aṯrt*, that discussion having been placed in chapter 7.1. The opinions of other scholars on this subject are only referred to in this chapter, inasmuch as they have any relevance to the interpretation of any given epithet, or to Asherah's place in the Ugaritic pantheon.
3.   *CTA* 3.IV.2 - 3.V.48 - 4.I.14 + 22 - 4.II.28 + 31 - 4.III.25 +29 + 34 - 4.IV.2 + 4 + 31 + 40 + 53 + 64 - 6.I.45 + 47 + 53 - 8.1.

times in a context where it is the dwelling of *rbt aṯrt ym* that is parallel to the dwelling of El. The remaining nine occurrences are without parallels. This is the single title that occurs most frequently, and therefore one might assume that it was the one most commonly used. This, however, is not necessarily correct, since this title only appears in the Ugaritic texts belonging to the group of Baal-texts.[4] None of the other texts or text-groups, including the lists of sacrifices, use the combination *rbt aṯrt ym*.[5]

As will be seen in the following, I have chosen a translation of *ym* that is different from the traditional ones, namely 'day', rather than 'sea' or 'Yam'. The chosen translation is orthographically and grammatically, as probable as the traditional ones, and—as will be seen—slightly less improbable judging by internal factors in the texts.

I have never succeeded in finding any scholar *arguing* in favor of translating *ym* as 'sea'; the closest are the statements that Ugarit, like Tyre and Sidon, was a coastal city with extensive sea-trading, and that one of Asherah's sons seems to be the sea-god, Yam. These statements, combined with the fact that one of Asherah's servants, *qdš wamrr*, is also called 'Asherah's fisherman', are the only existing reasons for connecting her closely with the sea.[6]

The fact that one has to look at either a divine servant or a child, in order to find out what field of interest the relevant god has, makes one suspicious. If we try to relate this to Greek mythology, we could define Zeus as a wine-god—or for that matter the god of pederasts—since Greece is a wine-producing country, and Zeus has a very young and very beautiful male cupbearer, Ganymede. If one looks at the Ugaritic texts themselves it seems strange that a parallel between Asherah's maid, *dmgy*, and *tlš*, servant of the moon-god, *yrḫ*, goes unmentioned.[7]

It was W.F. Albright who put forward what must be called the

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4.   The fragment *CTA* 8 is here viewed as belonging to this group of texts. For an extremely short discussion of whether the so-called Baal-cycle is indeed a cycle, see section 3.1.2.1.

5.   The closest one comes outside the Baal texts is *RIH* 78/20, where *rbt aṯrt* is mentioned.

6.   It is interesting to note in this connection that A.L. Perlman, in her dissertation from 1978, regards *dgy* as a possible epitheton to *qdš wamrr*, and understands the name *qdš wamrr* as an Ugaritic version of the god Amurru. I quote this thesis from Wiggins 1993: 41, as I have not had access to Perlman's dissertation.

7.   Cf. *CTA* 12.I.14b-17a, see below.

classical theory on this title. He proposed that the name Asherah de-
rives from √'*ṯr*, which corresponds to the Hebrew √אשׁר, meaning 'to
go forth, to walk or to tread'. He therefore translates *rbt aṯrt ym* as
'she who treads on the sea(dragon)' or 'she who walks on the sea'. He
claims that an original *tnn*, has disappeared from the name (Albright
1968: 105). Albright likewise claims that this name refers to the 'orig-
inal myth' (whatever that may be) in which Asherah vanquished the
sea-dragon, thereby making it possible for El to create the world. This
theory is widely accepted, primarily by American scholars (namely
Cross 1973: 31 and Olyan 1988: 70). Interesting as this theory is—and
please note, it is only a theory, even if it is usually put forward as a
statement of fact—it has major weaknesses. While *aṯrt ym* may be
translated as 'she who treads on the sea', there is, as noted by
Emerton, no reason to suppose that *aṯrt šrm* (another of the titles held
by Asherah in Ugarit) should be translated as 'she who treads on
Tyre/the Tyrians'.[8] J.C. de Moor raises another, equally valid, objec-
tion to Albright's hypothesis: it presupposes that *ym* is a part of the
name itself, and not, as is the case, an independent word.[9]

Some very few—and indeed very weak—indications that *aṯrt ym*
could be translated as 'she who treads on the sea(dragon)' have been
pointed out by various scholars. Olyan connects the missing *tnn* in the
name with an identification between Asherah and the Punic *tnt*,
Tannit, and connects this in turn with 2 Kgs 18.4, where Nehuštan—
the snake of copper—is removed from the Temple in Jerusalem along
with 'the asherah'.[10] This theory is interesting, but builds on a number
of presuppositions, such as the dubious identification between Asherah
and Tannit.[11]

The fact that she is never associated with the sea in any of the texts
speaks against understanding Asherah either as the lady of the sea or
as treading on the sea-dragon. The closest connection between Ashe-
rah and the sea is found in *CTA* 6.V.1-4, where 'the sons of Asherah'
might stand in parallel with the sea-god Yam and the god of death

8.   Emerton 1982: 8. *aṯrt šrm*, *CTA* 14.4.(198) and 201. The name is in par-
allel to *ilt šdnym*. A discussion of this passage is to be found in section 4.1.1.4. For
a discussion of the etymology and meaning of '*ṯrt*, see section 7.1.
9.   Cf. *ThWAT* 1, 473-81.
10.   Olyan 1988: 70f. Regarding 2 Kings 18: 4, see section 6.2.2.
11.   Cf. Hvidberg-Hansen 1979, who identifies Tannit with Anat. See also my
article (Binger 1992) on the subject of dragon-fighting in Ugarit.

Mot, and in the already mentioned fact that she has a fisherman for her servant.[12] This seems a bit meager to me.

Another approach is to look at the Asherah known from Akkadian texts. In these Asherah is partly connected with the plains in the title *belit šeri* and partly with the mountains and the steppes, but at no time is Asherah connected with the sea or the rivers in the Akkadian texts.[13] When this is taken into consideration, the maritime connotations seem to recede even further into the shade. If the only possible translation of *ym* was either 'the sea' or 'Yam', one would have to explain it in the more or less far-fetched ways that are the only explanations used; but there is another possible translation, namely, 'day', the one chosen here. The indications for this being the correct meaning of the word in this connection are at least as good as the existing explanations for Albright's interpretation.[14]

As mentioned above, interpreting *rbt aṯrt ym* as 'Lady Asherah of the day' is syntactically and orthographically as possible as the traditional interpretations; the only major problem in the way of this interpretation is that the sun-goddess in Ugarit (a natural owner of a title including the word 'day') is not Asherah, but *špš*. For this reason Asherah cannot be a 'regular' sun-goddess, but she could still be seen as a goddess with solar connotations and character. However, this problem is neither greater nor smaller than the one facing the traditional interpretation of *ym*, inasmuch as there is a sea-god in Ugarit bearing just that name.

If we initially consider the problem of *špš* and 'Lady Day', and try to look into the texts where both *špš* and Asherah appear, only one text turns up, the difficult and much discussed *CTA* 23, 'The Birth of the Gracious Gods', whose mythological content appears to be the birth of the gods 'Dawn' and 'Dusk'. In lines 23-27, both Asherah and *špš* are mentioned.[15]

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12. For a discussion of *CTA* 6.V.1-4, see section 4.1.1.5.

13. Akkadian texts are accepted as a supplement to the Ugaritic texts, since a major part of the extant texts belong to the same period, just as there are clear indications of communication between Ugarit and the Mesopotamian region. See the excursus on the Akkadian Asherah below.

14. After finishing this section, I was made aware of a small article by Watson (1993). He argues for translating *ym* as 'day' (as I do), but draws on Akkadian material to make his point.

15. There does not seem to be any direct connection between the first 29 lines of

CTA 23.23-27[16]

23.	*iqran.i<l>m.n'mm*	I call upon the gracious gods
	< .bn> ym[17]	< ><sons> of the day[18]
24.	*ynqm.bap ẓd.aṯrt*	who suck the tip of Asherah's breast
	< >[19]	<who suck ???>
25.	*špš.mṣprt*[20]*.dlthm< >*	*špš* ...[21]
26.	*wǵnbm.*	and their grapes (??).
	šlm.'rbm.ṯn<nm>[22]	peace (with) the cult-functionaries (and) the soldi<ers>
27.	*hlkm.bdbḥ n'mt*	those bringing good sacrifice.

A closer look at this text reveals that the lacuna in line 24 could have held somewhere between six and eight signs. The lacuna might be expected to have contained a parallel to Asherah, or a parallel to *ynqm.bap ẓd*. If the latter is the case, there seems to be no room left for the name of another goddess or another name or title of Asherah, in which case, *špš*, appearing in the beginning of line 25, must be the parallel name to Asherah. This possible direct parallel between Asherah and *špš* could signify that these two goddesses are related in some way. The parallel is, however, highly dubious, since it is partly built

the text and the rest. From line 30 the text becomes a fairly coherent story, which can hardly be said of the first 29 lines.

16.   *CTA* 23 = *KTU* 1.23 = *UT* 52. Autograph: *CTA* II, fig. 67 + 68. In the notes, not only to this text, but to all other Ugaritic texts used here, I quote extensively from the variant readings and proposed emendations listed in *CTA*. For any references in these notes, not found in the literature of this book, I refer the reader to *CTA*.

17.   *CTA, KTU* and *UT*: *ilm.n'mm<.agzrym.bn>ym*. Autograph:: *iqran. i< >m. n'm☐<------>☐m*.

18.   *bn ym* could be translated as 'sons of the sea'. I have chosen to disregard the reconstruction appearing in *CTA, KTU* and *UT*: *agzrym*. This is not just because it is a reconstruction, but also because there seems to be widespread disagreement on what exactly the root *gzr* means.

19.   Bauer (sec. *CTA*): *<nrt ilm>*.

20.   *CTA*: *špš . mṣprt. KTU*: *špš . ms(?)/ṣ(?)prt. UT*: *špš myprt*. Virolleaud, (sec. *CTA*): *my prt*. Autograph: *m☐prt*. It is, according to *CTA*, possible to read the second letter of the second word as either *y, s* or *ṣ*.

21.   The rest of the line has not been translated, since the disagreement between the various dictionaries and word-lists is so huge, that it is impossible to ascertain what the words mean in themselves, much less what their combined interpretations should be.

22.   *CTA* and *UT*: *ṯn<nm>. KTU*: *ṯnnm*.

on a lacuna, and partly goes against another text—*CTA* 15.II.26-27—
where Asherah and the virgin Anat are in parallel to each other, both
functioning as nurses for *ysb*, son of *krt*.[23] Here one could claim that
the goddess in the lacuna of *CTA* 15.II.27 is probably not Anat, but
špš, a highly speculative possibility, since the only goddess known to
bear the title of *btlt*, 'virgin', in the Ugaritic texts is Anat.[24] The text
under discussion here can therefore only be used as a putative, but
admittedly very weak, piece of circumstantial evidence for the claim
that *špš* and Asherah could have had related interests.

The other indication in the Ugaritic texts that suggests that *rbt atrt
ym* could be translated 'Lady Asherah of the Day' (or just Lady Day)
is the following text, which I have mentioned earlier:

CTA 12.I.14b-17a[25]

14.	*(zi . at) . ltlš*	(...) for *tlš*
15.	*amt . yrḫ*	Yarikh's handmaid
16.	□*dmgy*[26] *. amt*	for *dmgy*, handmaid
17.	*atrt . (qḥ)*	(to) Asherah ....

Looking at this text the parallel between *tlš* and *dmgy* seems
obvious. They could be parallel because they are both handmaids, but
there is a remote possibility that they are posed in an antithetical par-
allel, which places the moon-god Yarikh opposite Asherah, a goddess
with solar connotation. This possibility is at the very least as conjec-
tural as the indications found in *CTA* 23, its only merit being that it
does not build on a lacuna.

The third possible justification for regarding *špš* and Asherah as
having mutual interests is found in the word *rbt*, part of the title
under discussion. According to Whitaker, the word *rbt* appears only a
handful of times on its own. It is more usually part of the phrase *rbt
atrt ym*. It is, however, used in *CTA* 4.V.65, of El's wisdom; in *CTA*
5.III.2-3 of someone's home (*tbt*). In the poem about *krt* it is used in
connection with the town of *udm* and of *krt*'s kingdom *ḫbr*, and

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23. For a discussion of this text, see section 4.1.2.3.
24. I am not the only one to speculate on this. Wyatt 1983: 273 notes the same
idea. He does so, however, from a different angle, and considers that Asherah and
špš should be seen as geminated forms of the sun and as morning and evening
mother of '*ttr* in the fragmentary text of *CTA* 12.
25. *CTA* 12.I.14b-17a = *KTU* 1.12.I.14b-17a = *UT* 75 14b-17a. Autograph:
CTA II, fig. 34.
26. *CTA, KTU* and *UT*: *l dmgy*.

finally it is used in *CTA* 16.I.36 and in *CTA* 23.54 of *špš*.[27] These two texts show that Asherah is not the only goddess in the Ugaritic pantheon bearing the title *rbt*.

Before looking into the other possible indications in favor of understanding *rbt atrt ym* as 'Asherah, Lady Day', it is necessary to look closer at the Akkadian goddess Ašratum, who, with a name similar to the Ugaritic goddess, might also be the same goddess.

Excursus: Asherah in the Babylonian and Assyrian Material[28]

In the literature from the Mesopotamian area, a goddess by the name Ašratum (Sumerian, Gubarra) appears as the consort of the god Amurru (Sumerian, Mar.tu/-Kur.gal).[29]

If we start the wrong way around and look at Amurru, we learn that he is a mountain-god, called 'Lord of the mountains', and that his Sumerian appellative 'Kur-gal' means 'The great mountain' according to *RLA*. He is the son of the god of heaven, Anu, and is associated—or even identified with—*Adad ša abube*, Adad of the flood; with the moon-god Sin, and with the god of the scribes. His symbol is—according to *RLA*—the bull (!). His consort(s) are Ašratum, *Gál-(Ig)-an-na-gál-la*, 'who opens the door of heaven'; *Ninanna-Ištar*, and the sister of Tammuz, *ᵈGeštin-an-na*, who—like Ašratum—is called *bêlit ṣeri*, 'lady of the steppes'. According to Meissner (1925), *Geštin-anna* is the scribe of the underworld, and is the queen of the city of Mari. She is associated with Amurru because he is a 'western' god, and the realm of the dead was placed in the west.

Ašratum's consort then, seems to be a gentleman of all-round interests, and the picture does not get any clearer when we look at the lady herself. She is—as mentioned above—*bêlit ṣeri*, 'lady of the steppes', and is also (cf. *RLA*) 'the bride of the god of heaven', just as she is called 'the mistress of fullness and abundance who is rightly honored in the mountains, mistress of mercy'.[30] She is known from the time of the third dynasty of Ur until the Seleucids.

Depending on which of the above-mentioned works one reads, Ašratum is identified with one or more of the consorts of Amurru, and it is possible that these many

27. *CTA* 16.I: (36) *rbt* (37) *špš.wtgh.nyr* (38) <r>bt. (*rbtšpš// nyr rbt*, 'the great light'). In *CTA* 23.54 *rbt* is rather indistinct but legible.

28. This excursus is mainly built on *RLA*, Meissner 1925 and Jastrow 1912, and—as the only recent author—Wiggins 1993: 132-50.

29. According to *KML*, I.31, Amurru-Martu is 'an Amorite god with traits in common with the West-Semitic Baal, and possibly also a moon-god'.

30. According to D. Frayne, *Old Babylonian Period* (Toronto, 1990), quoted in Wiggins 1993: 136, she is the 'daughter-in-law of the god An', rather than the bride of An. She is also '...lady of voluptuousness and happiness, tenderly cared for in the mountain, lady with patient mercy, who prays reverently for her spouse...'

goddesses could be 'the same one'. Thus it is not impossible that a goddess with the name Ašratum (which can be a poetic name for 'Heaven')[31] could be the same as the goddess who opens the doors of Heaven, *Gál-(lg)-an-na-gál-la*. Nor is it impossible to imagine that two goddesses bearing the same epithet are identical, like *Geštin-anna* and Ašratum, who both are married to Amurru, and both have the title *bêlit şeri*.

If we then look into the extant parallels between the Ašratum of Mesopotamia, and the *atrt* of Ugarit, it is interesting to note that both have a consort whose symbol is the bull.[32] It is equally interesting to see that Amurru is called a moon-god, particularly when one considers that it is not unusual for mythology to marry a solar deity to a lunar.[33]

We can now conclude that the Mesopotamian goddess Ašratum has no connection whatsoever with the sea or the rivers: quite the opposite, she has close connections with the dry land, the steppes, the heavens, and the mountains. The obvious explanation for this apparent discrepancy between the traditional interpretation of the Ugaritic Asherah and that the Babylonian Ašratum could be that they have nothing in common apart from their name. The other possible explanation is that *rbt atrt ym* has been translated wrongly.

A goddess who is the 'creatress of the gods' (see section 4.1.1.2.) could be associated with the sea or the waters, in much the same way as the Babylonian Tiamat. Tiamat, however, is not recognized as the 'ultimate' mother of all the gods in *Enuma Elish*; conversely she is given the blame for everything that goes wrong. The Ugaritic Asherah is given full recognition as the progenitress or creatress of the gods; she can if not rule, then at least influence El; and she is very powerful, both in her own right and through her sons, the gods (see section 4.1.1.5). She is not a passive or dethroned creator-goddess like those known to us from both Greek and Babylonian mythology.[34]

In the Ugaritic texts one could finally look at Asherah's connection with El, who is *ab šnm*, a title traditionally translated as 'the father of

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31. See section 7.1. on the etymology of 'Asherah'.

32. Asherah's consort in Ugarit is 'the bull El'.

33. See section 4.2.1, the Ugaritic text *KTU* 1.118 and the Akkadian text RS 20.24.

34. As mentioned above, the goddess Tiamat features in *Enuma Elish*. In Greek mythology, the identity of the creatress is dependent on which mythological 'school' one belongs to. She could be Eurynome, splitting the waters or Thetys—a sea-goddess—who created the gods together with Oceanus; she is also called 'night', Νύξ, or 'Mother Earth' (cf. Graves 1985 §§1-3).

years'. It has, however, been argued by F.O. Hvidberg-Hansen that 'father of years' should properly be written *ab šnt*, with a feminine ending (*KML*, II, 32 n. 7). He proposes regarding *šnm* as a derivative of Arabic *sanâ* or *saniya* (*snw/y*), with the translation, 'shining, light', or 'lightning', and may thus translate *ab šnm* with 'father of light', a most appropriate title for the spouse of 'Lady Day'.

If we move from Babylon to Arabia, there seems to be a goddess in both the south and the north, called *'trt* or *'šr'*, who could be a solar goddess, consort of the lunar god. There is no clear cut evidence for this, only weak indications, even though Lipiński treats her solar character as a fact.[35] In addition, it is noteworthy that the information, both in Lipiński and in *Wörterbuch der Mythologie*, comes from Catabania, which is as far south on the Arabian peninsula as one can possibly get.

In conclusion, the internal evidence for understanding *rbt aṯrt ym* as 'Lady Asherah of the Day' is limited and circumstantial, but does exist. In both the Ugaritic and non-Ugaritic material discussed above, nothing indicates the existence of a Sea-goddess Asherah, but solar connotations can be found in the texts. For these reasons I propose that *rbt aṯrt ym* should throughout be translated as 'Asherah, Lady Day'.

4.1.1.2. *qnyt ilm*. This title occurs a total of five times, always parallel to *rbt aṯrt ym*, and only in the so-called Baal-cycle.[36] It translates as 'the creatress of the gods' or 'the progenitress of the gods'.

We are given no explanation of what exact meaning this title conveyed to the people of Ugarit. An Ugaritic epic of creation has never been found, which again means that any assertions and references regarding this title build on conjectures, assumptions (a constant factor in all research on the mythological texts from Ugarit) and on analogies from other Semitic stories.

A problem that has hitherto remained undiscussed is the question of

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35. Lipiński 1980: 101-103, who quotes from *Wörterbuch der Mytologie*. In this work, one finds the following explanation under the heading 'Südarabien', the article "*Aṯirat ('ṮRT)*': 'und da sie (*'Aṯirat*) mehrfach in Verbindung mit dem Mondgott erscheint, sah man in *'A.* eine Gestalt der Sonnengöttin; dies ist jedoch damit keineswegs erwiesen'.

36. *CTA* 4.III.26 + 30 + 35 - 4.IV.32 - 8.2.

whether Asherah, as *qnyt ilm*, really has created all the gods, including El. The general scholarship on Ugaritic mythology presupposes a more or less normal marriage between El and Asherah, including a traditional Western and Christian pattern of gender roles. He creates the world while she stays at home, keeping the pots boiling and his slippers warm.[37]

If we look at the problem 'mythologically', Greek mythology has a creatress making the world; she has her first children without any consort, she then rules the gods and her consort, who is her son. This is likewise more or less the case in *Enuma Elish*, where Tiamat bears the first gods on her own, and initially rules with her eldest son at her side. Looking at these two myths in combination with Asherah's title of *qnyt ilm*, it can be supposed that it was she, not El, who created the gods and thus made possible the creation of the world in the as yet unfound Ugaritic myth of creation.

A similar picture can be gleaned from looking at the 'creator' epithets of El: he is *bny bnwt*, the builder or maker of what is made or built, as well as the *ab adm*, the father of man. The main implication in the verbal root √בנה is, in biblical Hebrew, Akkadian and Ugaritic, 'building', whereas the root √קנה is usually connected with creation.[38] This, taken in connection with the epithet *ab adm* seems to indicate that El might have been a creator-god, but, in a manner of speaking, only at what could be termed 'second hand'. The creation of the gods was not in his hands, even if that of creatures, be it humans or others, seems to have been. In conclusion, it can be conjectured from this epithet that Asherah was the creatress in the mythological world of the epic texts at least, but since no myth of creation has come to light so far, this is conjecture, not fact.

4.1.1.3. *atrt = ilt?* In a number of texts, *aṯrt* is seen in parallel with *ilt*, and it is often asserted that *ilt* and Asherah are identical, and that *ilt* functions as a divine name or epithet, 'Elat', and not as a generic

37. Albright 1968:105 modifies this a bit, since he—cf. *rbt aṯrt ym*—finds that El only created the world/universe, after Asherah had vanquished the sea-dragon. Please note though, that—in spite of everything—it is the male, and not the female god, who is seen as the literally creative one.

38. The root √בנה is also used of creation, but in the majority of occurences it means 'building' (with already existing materials).

term, 'goddess'. The most frequently used formula paralleling Asherah and *ilt* occurs in *CTA* 6.I.40-41, where it is complete.[39]

CTA 6.I.40-41

| *tšmh ḫt* (40) *aṯrt.wbnh.* | Now Asherah and her sons rejoice |
| *ilt.wṣb* (41) *rt.aryh.* | the goddess and all her kin[40] |

The parallel is between *aṯrt.wbnh* and *ilt.wṣbrt.aryh*, and there can hardly be any serious doubt about the parallel between *aṯrt* and *ilt*, since 'her sons', *bnh*, and 'all her kin', *ṣbrt aryn*, are coupled with the divine designation by a *w* in both text-units. The only difficulty is that in this text *ilm*, the gods as such, cannot possibly be identified with the sons of Asherah. The texts imply that the sons of Asherah, or the kin of the goddess, are alive and kicking, and since at least one of the *ilm*, namely Baal, is dead, and the words above are put into the mouth of Anat, who mourns him, two gods, at the very least, are not included in the phrase *aṯrt wbnh*.[41]

In this limited context it is not particularly relevant to discuss at length how one should translate the phrase *ṣbrt aryh* properly, nevertheless two other possible translations should be mentioned. Apart from the translation chosen above, one could see an allusion to lions in the word *ary*, deriving the etymology from biblical Hebrew, ʾרי. Thus, Maier's translation of the phrase, 'her pride of lions', goes beautifully with the connection Asherah *might* have with lions.[42] The second possibility is to see *ary* as derived from the same root as biblical Hebrew ʾור, 'light', and thus translate the phrase 'her company of

39.   *CTA* 6.I.40-41 = *KTU* 1.6.I.40-41 = *UT* 49.I.13-14. Autograph: *CTA* II, fig. 21, line 13-14.

40.   Maier 1986: 8 and elsewhere translates *ṣbrt ary* with 'pride of lions'. See discussion below.

41.   This points in the direction that the *bn aṯrt* is a category of gods in line with the *pḫr il / mpḫrt bn il / dr bn il* and the *pḫr b'l*, thus contradicting Wiggins 1993, who throughout assumes that *all* the Ugaritic gods are the children of Asherah. He does not seem, however, to include El in this group.

42.   See the excursus on Qudšu and the following section. Maier 1986: 9 mentions that it is common in the Ugaritic texts, to use animal names as designations for, for example, the inhabitants in *krt*'s kingdom. Løkkegaard 1953 claims that all Ugaritic gods 'have' or 'are' an animal (cf. the title of the article, 'El the Bull'). One could also mention Cross 1981, who interprets the inscription *'bdlbt* 'the servant of the lioness', as a reference to Asherah. The inscription is found on an arrow-head found at el-Khadr near Bethlehem.

light', or something in that vein, an allusion to her being 'Lady Day'.

Another text often referred to when discussing the relationship between *aṯrt* and *ilt*, *CTA* 14.IV.197-202, will be examined in the next section.

Even though *aṯrt* and *ilt* are often treated as synonymous, it is not possible to presuppose that this is always the case, as shown by the following text, where *ilt* is used as a parallel to Anat:

CTA 3.II.18[43]

| 17. | *whln. 'nt.lbth.tmġy*□[44] | and look! Anat comes to her house, |
| 18. | *tštql.ilt.lhklh* | the goddess arrives at her palace. |

It is thus important to stress that *ilt* is most probably a generic term, meaning 'goddess', and neither a name, 'Elat', nor one of Asherah's epithets. Thus, any *ilt* appearing in a mythological text or in the lists of sacrifices discussed below is not automatically to be equated with Asherah. We could be dealing with Asherah or with any other goddess in the Ugaritic pantheon.

This is also the reason why the passage in *CTA* 1.IV, where *ilt* is apparently called upon to proclaim the name of *yw* or *ym*, is not discussed. In order to read this passage at all, one has to reconstruct at least half of every line, and in order to find any reference to Asherah, one has to equate her with *ilt*, a somewhat dubious practice. She does, however, have a close connection with the divinity whose name seems to be proclaimed here, *ym*, not because of her title *rbt aṯrt ym*, as claimed by Wiggins (1993: 29 and elsewhere) but rather because she is, presumably, the mother of *ym* (see section 4.1.1.5).

Another avenue of thought is opened up by the fact that the word *aṯrt*, which hitherto has been treated as a name, apparently can be parallel to a title without this creating any problems. This makes one wonder whether Asherah is in fact a personal name, as hitherto assumed, or rather a title, like *ilt*. It is not impossible to find a title being used in the Ugaritic texts as a personal name. Baal means 'Lord', but he apparently has a more 'regular' personal name in 'Hadad', and the word *il*, 'El', meaning 'God' seems to function both as a particular god's name and as a generic term. If *aṯrt* is a title rather than a name (or indeed a generic term), then *CTA* 6.I.40-41,

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43. *CTA* 3.II = *KTU* 1.3.II = *UT* 'NT II. Autograph: *CTA* II, fig. 8.

44. *CTA* and *KTU*: *tmġyn*.

could be translated, 'now (the) *aṯrt* and her sons rejoice, (the) *ilt* and all her kin'. This line of argument is not weakened by *CTA* 3.II.17-18 (above), since we do not have to argue that Anat is likewise a title rather than a name. In the relevant text we could be dealing with a generic use of *ilt*, whereas in the former text we dealt with the name or title *ilt*.

4.1.1.4. *aṯrt* = *qdš?* As will be seen in section 4.1.1.5, both *bn aṯrt*, 'the sons of Asherah' and *bn qdš*, 'the sons of the holy one/Qudšu', are used as parallels to the word *ilm*, 'the gods'.[45] This, seen in connection with *CTA* 16.I.11 + 21-22 and *CTA* 16.II.111, has created the impression that *qdš* was one of the regular epithets of Asherah.

CTA 16 I.20-22[46]

20.	*ikm.yrgm.bn il*(21)*krt*	How can it be said that *krt* is the son of El,
	šph[47].*lṭpn*(22)*wqdš.*	the offspring of *lṭpn* and *qdš*
	u ilm tmtn	or can (shall) gods die ?

One could, in this and the parallel passages, see *qdš* as Asherah, and thus make *krt* a god, a status that agrees with the question in line 22, 'can gods die?'. Alternatively, one could follow Pope and dismiss the possibility of any Ugaritic texts equating Asherah with *qdš*.[48] Pope claims that *qdš* in these passages refers to El, and therefore translates *lṭpn wqdš* 'Beneficent and Holy'. If Pope is right, it seems strange that line 22 refers to *ilm*, regular gods, rather than to heroes or half-gods.[49]

Another passage from the poem of *krt* points in the same direction as the above texts, inferring that Asherah and *qdš* could be the same.

45.   *bn* is read here as a plural in the construct state, in order for it to be parallel to the plural *ilm*. See, however, below, section 4.1.2.1, for a different interpretation.

46.   *CTA* 16 I.20-22 is used here since it is the most complete. *CTA* 16.I.1-22 = *KTU* 1.16.I.1-22 = *UT* 125.1-22. Autograph: *CTA* II, fig. 44. *CTA* 16.II.105-111 = *KTU* 1.16.II.43-49 = *UT* 125.105-111. Autograph: *CTA* II, fig. 47.

47.   *CTA*: *krt<.>šph*. *KTU*: *krt. šph*. *UT*: *krtšph*.

48.   Pope 1955: 43-44 Regarding Pope's stand on *bn qdš*, see section 4.1.1.5.

49.   One could argue that Ugaritic had no word for a half-god, but the argument seems a bit thin, and is under any circumstances an argument *ex silencio*.

CTA 14.IV.197-206a[50]

197.	*ym<ǵy.>*[51] *lqdš*	He came to *qdš*,
198.	*a<ṯrt.>*[52] *ṣrm.*	*<aṯrt>* of the Tyrians,[53]
199.	*wlilt ṣd<yn>m.*[54]	and to *ilt* of the Sidonians.[55]
200.	*ṯm yd<r.k>rṯ*[56]*.ṯ'*	There *krt* makes an oath:
201.	*i iṯt.aṯrt. ṣrm*	(As truly as) *aṯrt* of the Tyrians exists
202.	*wilt. ṣdynm*	and *ilt* of the Sidonians (exists):
203.	*hm. ḥry.bty* (204) *iqḥ.*	If I take *ḥry* into my house,
	aš'rb. ǵlmt (205) *ḥẓry.*	make the girl enter my court
	ṯnh.wspm[57] (206) *atn.*	I will give twice her (value or weight) in silver
	w.ṯlṯth[58]*.ḥrṣm*	and thrice her (value or weight) in gold.

The first three lines of this passage are the most interesting in this connection. If we look at the way they are formed, we see that we are dealing with two sentences, each containing a prepositional phrase using the preposition *l*, the first one stating the verb (and the subject contained within the verb), the second implying the verb. Provided that there is a consistent shaping of this poem (something we cannot know for a fact), it is reasonable to suppose that the prepositional phrases are parallel, since they both use the *l*, and both refer to a goddess and a place.

The problem is that the first *l* is followed by three words, whereas the parallel passage only has two words after the preposition. Since both contain a reference to a geographic location it seems safe to assume that these two words are parallel. We are then left with the words *qdš aṯrt* in the first prepositional phrase, and the word *ilt* in the second. We could suppose *qdš aṯrt* to be a unity—it might after all be an exact rendition of the title given to Asherah in Tyre. We would

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50. *CTA* 14.IV.197-206 = *KTU* 1.14.IV.34-44 = *UT*: KRT 197-206 = RS.3.44. Autograph: *CTA* II, fig. 37.

51. *CTA* and *KTU*: *ym<ǵy.>*. *UT*: *ym<ǵyn>*. Autograph: *y☐< >*.

52. *CTA* and *UT*: *a<ṯrt.>*. *KTU*: *aṯ<r>t<.>*. Autograph: *☐< >*.

53. Or, 'he arrives at the sanctuary of the Asherah of the Tyrians'; or, 'he arrives at *qdš*, the Asherah of the Tyrians'; or even, 'he arrives at *qdš*, *aṯrt* of the Tyrians'.

54. *CTA*: *ṣd<yn>m*. *KTU* and *UT*: *ṣd<y>nm*. Autograph: *ṣd< >☐m*.

55. Or, 'and to *ilt* (who is the Asherah) of the Sidonians'.

56. *CTA*: *yd<r.k>rt*. *KTU*: *ydr<.>krt*. *UT*: *ydr.krt*. Virolleaud (sec. *CTA*): *yd<b.k>rt*. Autograph: *yd☐< >rt*.

57. *CTA* and *UT*: *k!spm*. *KTU*: *wspm (kspm)*.

58. *CTA*: *atn.wṯlṯh*. *KTU*: *atn.w.ṯlṯh*.

then be dealing with a parallel that structurally resembles the above discussed *aṯrt wbnh // ilt.wṣ brt.aryh*. If this is not the case, then only one of the words can be in a direct parallel with the *ilt* in the second phrase. The solution to this problem can be found in lines 201-202, where *aṯrt ṣrm* is parallel to *ilt ᶜdnm*. This makes it possible either to translate *qdš* in this text as 'sanctuary', or to regard both *aṯrt* and *ilt* as synonymous generic terms, both elaborating on exactly how one should understand *qdš*.[59]

The listing of all these possible interpretations makes it clear that it is not possible to deduce from this text whether the word is a synonym for Asherah, a substantive meaning 'sanctuary', an adjective meaning 'holy', the name of a goddess in her own right, a generic term, a title or indeed, any of the above. That we might be dealing with a goddess in her own right could be deduced from the existence of an Egyptian goddess, called Qudsu. Since this goddess is often seen as being identical with Asherah, the following excursus will deal with her.

Excursus: The Egyptian Qudšu[60]

From the nineteenth dynasty onwards, Egyptian mythology knows of a goddess bearing the name Qudšu. Not much is known about her, but she is apparently a goddess with roots in the Semitic world. On the stelas depicting her, she is usually seen standing between the gods Min and Rešeph, the latter being another Semitic god. She is depicted naked, *en face*, and usually holds snakes or lotus-flowers in her hands, sometimes both. She wears a Hathor-wig and usually has some kind of head-dress as well. This, however, varies. She often stands on a lion, like the Babylonian Ištar.[61]

On the stelas with an inscription identifying her, she is called 'the mistress of the heaven(s)', 'the mistress of the gods', 'the eye of Ra' or 'the beloved of Ra', 'she who loves Ptah' and 'the eye of Atum', according to Helck. Only two of the stelas mentioned by Helck, and four of the ones listed by Edwards, also give the name Qudšu. One gives her the 'incomprehensible' name *knt*,[62] another calls her Qudšu-Astarte-Anat, while the last two only call her Qudšu.[63]

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59.   See section 7.1; Margalit 1989, 1990. Dietrich and Loretz 1984.

60.   The following is mainly based on Edwards 1955 and Helck 1971.

61.   Some stelas are shown in *ANEP*, figs. 470-74 and 830. *ANEP*, fig. 469 seems to have the same iconography as the stelas, even though this picture is of figurines from Palestine.

62.   Quoted from Helck 1971: 464 n. 153. Edwards calls it 'strange'.

63.   The remaining stelas have (cf. Edwards) no legible name for the goddess depicted.

The stela carrying the inscription 'Qudšu-Astarte-Anat' has given rise to wide-spread acceptance of Qudšu as an alternative name for Asherah[64] since Asherah in the Ugaritic texts seems to be called *qdš*. Not everybody, however, accepts this iden-tification. Helck considers the combination of names to be secondary, and think they might be put together for no more sophisticated reason than that these were the names of Semitic goddesses known by the Egyptian that made the stela.[65]

It is tempting to connect the Egyptian Qudšu with Asherah, or even to identify the two with each other. Unfortunately no solid information exists to justify such an identification. It is possible that we are indeed dealing with 'the same goddess', but using the material at hand, it is impossible either to prove or disprove this. The facts arguing against the proposition that the Asherah known to us from the Ugaritic texts is the same as the Egyptian Qudšu are that nothing in the texts them-selves argue in favor of Asherah being a fertility goddess, whereas the iconography of Qudšu points out that she in all probability was one.[66]

The data in favor of an identification between Asherah and Qudšu are that they are both connected to the principal god of the area—Ra in Egypt, El in Ugarit—and they are both given a superior position in the heaven(s) in relation to the other gods.

The geographical distance between Ugarit and Egypt is of minor consideration in this case, since we have ample proof of connections between the two states, just as the fact that Qudšu is apparently a for-eign goddess derived from Syria-Palestine speaks in favor of compar-ing the two ladies with each other.

The small plaques and the statuettes from Bronze Age Palestine, representing a goddess who iconographically is practically identical to the representations of Qudšu on Egyptian stelas,[67] are probably a link

64.   So, e.g., Albright 1968: 106, 127.

65.   Helck 1971: 464 n. 145: 'Auch darf aus der Gleichsetzung von Qadshu-Astarte und Anat auf dem Relief *JNES* 14, 9ff [= Edwards 1955] nicht folgern, dass hier syrische Überlieferung vorläge, sondern diese Gleichsetzung ist sicher eine sekundäre durch einen Ägypter, der die ihm bekannten Hauptgöttinnen Asiens in eine Gestalt zusammenfasste.'

66.   Nevertheless Maier 1986 considers Asherah to be a fertility-goddess in Ugarit. His argument for this being the case reduces to the assertion that he 'feels' it is so, plus the fact that he *does* identify the Ugaritic *qdš* with Asherah and thus makes the identification with the Egyptian Qudšu. Regarding the text *CTA* 4.II.1-11, which is often called a fertility-rite, see section 4.1.2.1.

67.   Cf. Pritchard 1943: 6ff. Pritchard calls the type 'Qadsh', and his dating of them is the late Bronze Age, more or less contemporary with the Ugaritic texts.

between the Egyptian Qudšu and the Ugaritic *qdš*, who is not necessarily to be identified with Asherah. This link, however, remains mainly conjectural since no positive identification of the goddess is to be found on either the plaques or the statuettes.[68]

It is possible for gods and goddesses to have identical or very similar iconography in different cultures, but nevertheless maintain different functions. It is, however, not very probable when we are dealing with cultures as closely connected by trade and conquest as those of Egypt and Syria-Palestine in the Bronze Age; it is therefore possible to maintain that there could be a connection between the goddess known as Qudšu in Egypt and the small plaques and statuettes from Palestine.

All this leads to the conclusion that a Semitic goddess called Qudšu existed in Egypt; that Asherah in the Ugaritic texts regularly stands in parallel to the word *qdš*, and that there might be a connection between the two. The connection is impossible to prove or disprove on the basis of the material discussed so far, but the discussion will be continued in the following section.

4.1.1.5. *The Sons of aṯrt and the Sons of qdš*.[69] 'Asherah and her sons' or 'the sons of Asherah' occur a total of thirteen times,[70] whereas 'the sons of *qdš*' occurs a total of seven times.[71] If we look more closely at the parallels including these two phrases, the following result may be seen. All occurrences of both *bn aṯrt* and *aṯrt wbnh* are found in the so-called Baal-cycle, and only one of the occurrences of *bn aṯrt* has an atypical parallel.[72] Only in *CTA* 4.VI.46-54 is the standard parallel of *ilm // bn aṯrt* extended to both the gods and the goddesses *ilm* and *ilht*, just as this is the text giving us the number of the sons of Asherah: *šb'm bn aṯrt*, 'the 70 sons of Asherah'.[73] The remaining occurrences

68. For further reading on the subject of iconography of goddesses in the ancient Near East, see Winter 1983. Winter's study is perhaps the most comprehensive and erudite on the subject.

69. For a discussion of the singular–plural problem in these parallels, please see the discussion of *CTA* 8 in section 4.1.2.1.

70. *CTA* 3.IV.1; 3.V.12; 3.V.45; 3.V.47; 4.I.7; 4.I.12; 4.IV.49; 4.IV.51; 4.V.63; 4.VI.46; 6.I.40; 6.V.1; 8.4.

71. *CTA* 2.I.21; 2.I.38; 17.I.4, 9, 12, 14, 23.

72. *CTA* 6.V.1-6, see below.

73. One should not put too much emphasis on the exactness of given figures in texts like those discussed here. Figures are not 'absolute' in the sense that we operate

have the standard parallels of *bn aṯrt // ilm* and *aṯrt wbnh // ilt wṣbrt aryh*.[74]

If we now turn to *bn qdš*, we can see that it is only used with the parallel *ilm*, 'the gods', and that the phrase occurs five times in the poem of *aqht*, and twice in the Baal texts.

The question now is whether it is possible from these passages and their shared parallels to determine that Asherah is identical with *qdš*. As mentioned above there are two major points of view: one that claims that Asherah and *qdš* are indeed identical,[75] and one claiming, with equal certainty, that the two have nothing whatsoever to do with each other.[76] The only certain point of orientation is that the sons of both Asherah and *qdš* are identical with *ilm*, 'the gods', but since there is no further definition of exactly which gods we are dealing with in any of the groups of sons, it is impossible to determine whether we are dealing with the same gods, fully or partly.[77]

At no time are the phrases *bn aṯrt* and *bn qdš* in parallel to each other. This is to be seen in combination with the fact that it was not possible from the occurrences of *qdš* used alone to determine that *aṯrt* and *qdš* are identical. We will have to say that Asherah in Ugarit might have had the epithet of *qdš*, but that *qdš* can equally well be taken as a noun or an adjective. The texts do not give any conclusive evidence in favor of either possibility, and the choice thus depends on the scholar's individual preferences rather than on hard data.

In both the mythological and ritual texts, different groups of gods occur: *pḫr il*, 'the assembly of El', *mpḫrt bn il*, 'the assembly of El's sons' and *pḫr b'l* 'the assembly of Baal'. It would seem that the *bn aṯrt* could be a collective designation on a par with these three, but as no ritual-text nor list of sacrifices contains a reference to *bn aṯrt* and only

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with absolute figures, rather they signal 'many' (like the figures 7 and 8 in these Ugaritic poems) or 'an incredible lot of gods', like the '70 sons of Asherah'.

74. *.bn aṯrt // ilm* CTA 3.IV.1–3.V.11-12 and 46-47–4.I.12; 4.IV.51; 4.V.63; 8.3-5. *bn aṯrt // ilm+ilht* CTA 4.VI.46-54 *aṯrt wbnh // ilt wṣbrt aryh* CTA 3.V.45; 4.I.7-9; 4.IV.49; 6.I.40-41.

75. So de Moor, for example, *ARTU*, 32 n. 140 ('Qudshu'): 'Name of Athiratu, mother of the gods. Both Athiratu and Qudshu mean "holy place, sanctuary"'.

76. For example, Pope 1955: 43-44: 'Holiness pertains to the gods in general who are called *bn qdš*, "sons of holiness, holy ones"'.

77. The only god who is called a son of Asherah is Aštar, in *CTA* 6.I.45-55. On this text, see section 4.1.2.1.

by reconstruction a reference to *bn qdš*,[78] we will have to allow that this hypothesis remains unsubstantiated.

If we now try to determine which gods hide behind the designation *bn aṯrt* and attempt to name them, the texts at hand are surprisingly unhelpful since no list enumerating the sons, nor any list of sacrifices naming any divinity or divinities as the son(s) of Asherah has been found. In one text only—*CTA* 6.I.39-55—do we find one of Asherah's sons named directly: that is, Aštar. The only other possibility of identifying any other gods as the sons (or daughters for that matter) of Asherah, is found in *CTA* 6.V.1-4, where some of them might be mentioned, therefore this text will be discussed at length. There are a number of different possible translations of this text, but I have chosen only to present two here, as it is my opinion that they cover the main 'types' of possibilities. The text in itself reads:[79]

1.   *yiḫd.b'l.bn.aṯrt*
2.   *rbm.ymḫṣbktp*[80]
3.   □*kym*[81].*ymḫṣ.bṣmd*
4.   *ṣ*□*rm*□*ymṣi*[82].*larṣ*
5.   < >□□*š*[83]. *lksi.mlkh*
6.   □< >*lkḫt . drk*□*h*[84]

Translation 1

1.	*yiḫd.b'l.bn.aṯrt*	Baal seizes the sons of Asherah
2.	*rbm.ymḫṣ*	He kills the mighty ones
	bktp (3) *dk ym.ymḫṣ.*	He kills Yam[85] with a *ktp*[86]
	bṣmd (4) *ṣḥr mt ymṣi.*	With a club he _??ymṣi??_ *ṣḥr*-Mot[87]

78.   RS 19.59 V$^{0(1)}$, line 3 : *b>n . qdš*.
79.   *CTA* 6.V.1-6 = *KTU* 1.6.V.1-6 = *UT* 49.V.1-6. Autograph: *CTA* II fig. 25.
80.   *CTA* and *KTU*: *ymḫṣ.bktp*.
81.   *CTA*, *KTU* and *UT*: *dkym*. It is however equally possible to read *ukym*.
82.   *CTA*: *ṣḥr mt.ymṣḫ*. *KTU* and *MLC*: *ṣġrm.ymṣḫ*. *UT*: *ṣḥr mt.ymṣi*. According to the note in *CTA*, the last letter is an *i*, a fact also noted by Virolleaud (sec. *CTA*). The reading of the beginning of this text is very uncertain.
83.   *CTA*: <*yṯb.>b<'>l*. *KTU*: *p(?)y<'l.>b'l*. *UT*: < >*ṣ*. According to the note in *CTA*, it is also possible to reconstruct <*y'l> b'l*.
84.   *CTA*: <*lnḫt>.lkḫt.drkth*. or <*bn dgn>*. *KTU*: < >. *l kḫt.drkth*. *UT*: < > *lkḫt.drk<t>h*.
85.   *ARTU*: Those who are like Yammu.
86.   Probably a weapon. *UT* and *WUS*: 'shoulder, weapon'. *CARTU*: 'an axehead'. *KML*: 'a swordblade'.
87.   *KML*: *ṣḥr*: 'to parch, redden, glow, singe off'. *MLC*: *ṣḥrr*: *abrasar* ('to

larṣ (5) <*yṯb bʿl*.   <Ba>al <is sitting> on the earth (ground)
lksi.mlkh (6) < >   on the throne of his kingdom
lkṯ.drkth   on the chair of his reign

Translation 2

1.	*yiḫd.bʿl.bn.aṯrt*	Baal seizes the sons of Asherah,
2.	*rbm.ymḫṣ bktp*	he kills the mighty ones with a *ktp*,
3.	*dk ym.ymḫṣ.bṣmd*	those who are like Yam, he kills with a club,
4.	*ṣhrmt ymṣi.lars*	He ??ymṣi?? the small ones to the earth.
5.	<*yṯb bʿl.lksi.mlkh*	<Ba>al <is sitting> on the throne of his kingdom
6.	< > *lkḫṯ.drkth*	< > on the seat of his reign.

If we are to determine which parallels are the most probable, and thus which of the two scansions is the most satisfactory, we will need to look into the syntax of the lines, in order to ascertain where the majority of grammatical parallels occurs.[88]

Translation 1[89]

1. Subject + Verb + Object
2. Object + Verb
3. Preposition (b) + Object + Verb
4. Preposition (b) + Object + Verb
5. Preposition (l) + <Verb> + Subject
6. Preposition (l) + suffix (= Subject) + <Subject or Verb>
7. Preposition (l) + suffix (= Subject)

Translation 2

1. Subject + Verb + Object
2. Object + Verb + Preposition (b)
3. Object + Verb + Preposition (b)
4. Object + Verb + Preposition (l)
5. <Verb> + Subject + Preposition (l)
6. <Verb or Subject> + Preposition (l)

singe, burn off') *asar* ('to roast') *abrasarse* ('to glow') *secarse* ('to dry up, fade, wither'). *CML*: *šhr*: 'yellow, tawny'; *šhrr*: 'glowed, turned brown', glowing, blazing'. It is also possible to translate the phrase as one word, *šhrmt* : 'the small ones', cf. *ARTU*.

88. This attempt is based on the presupposition that each grammatical unit has, or should have, a direct parallel.

89. The lines given for this translation are not identical with the lines in the Ugaritic autograph, but correspond to the scansions made above.

The second translation seems to be the most satisfactory with regards to lines 2-4, since it presents us with a uniform structure. The only problem is that while the object–verb–preposition parallel is complete, it seems to be more difficult to find the parallel between the actual words hiding in the category of objects: *rbm, dk ym* and *shrmt*. If, however, we bring the object from line 1, *bn atrt*, into the discussion, it is possible to see the four objects as being in either direct or antithetical parallel to each other. Thus lines 2-4 could elaborate on line 1, and if this is the case, then the 'mighty ones', *rbm*, 'those who are like Yam', *dk ym*, and 'the small ones' (or *shr*-Mot), *shrmt*, must be seen as parallels to or elaborations on 'the sons of Asherah', *bn atrt*. The less convincing aspect of this construction is that the antithetical parallel (*rbm // shrmt*) is not placed in successive lines.

If on the other hand, we consider *bn atrt // rbm* and *shrmt // dk ym*, it seems strange that the author does not use the parallelism that has been built up in the prepositional phrases of lines 2-3. One could, however, imagine a structure where lines 2 and 3 are parallel, whereas lines 1 and 4 function as a framework for these two. If this is the case, we are dealing with the parallels *bn atrt // shrmt* and *rbm // dk ym*. This solution is still unsatisfactory, since it either identifies the sons of Asherah (in the plural) with 'the small ones', or it reduces them to a single god, namely, *shr*-Mot. One would rather expect that the sons of Asherah would be in parallel to either *rbm*, 'the great ones', or would be called *ilm*, 'gods'. One could naturally assume that the 'small ones' referred to should be understood in the singular, with an enclitic *mem*, and thus should refer to the god *'ttr*, whose small powers are referred to at the end of tablet 6.

Furthermore, the use of the prepositions seems slightly irregular. Part of the attraction of translation 2 was the direct structural parallel of the prepositional phrases. Unfortunately lines 2-3 use *l* in the instrumental sense, whereas line 4 uses *b* in a locative sense. One could of course claim that *ars* was a weapon, but then one has to discuss both the irregular use of a well-known word, as well as the use of a different preposition.

In translation 1, the scansion is less easy, but the parallels become more evident. Lines 1-2 become parallel, and tell us that *bn atrt* parallels *rbm*, as expected. Lines 3-4 create another parallel, and becomes identical in their syntactical structure. The parallels in these lines also become much more satisfactory, since we get *bktp // bsmd - dk ym //*

šḫr mt and *ymḫš // ymṣi*. Not only is there a first-class parallel between the prepositional phrases and the verbs, but the two gods mentioned—Yam and Mot—are well-known gods, just as they are well-known antagonists both of Baal and of his sister Anat, and it seems logical to put them in parallel to each other. This parallel is further strengthened by the text *CTA* 4.II. 24b-26a, where Asherah says:

CTA 4.II.24b-26a[90]

24. --- < *m>ḫṣ*[91] (25) *bny*   they (Baal and Anat), are the killers of my son(s),
    hm <mkly. ṣ>brt[92] (26) *aryy* they are the destroyers of my kin.

Finally, lines 5-7 (Translation n° 1, *CTA* 6.V.1-6) all have an initial prepositional phrase with *l*, and all three lines tell us where Baal can rest after having vanquished his opponents, namely on the seat of his reign, his throne.

This translation then offers us much information of great interest. We might deduce that Yam and Mot, the principal antagonists of Baal and Anat, are both sons of Asherah, and we might likewise deduce that the earth itself is seen as a suitable parallel for the throne of Baal.[93]

4.1.2. *Asherah in the Epic and Mythological Texts*
If we look more closely at the functions and roles of Asherah in the epic and mythological material from Ugarit, we realize that she is a very prominent goddess, but she is at the same time rather anonymous. Her prominence is caused by the many mentions of her, the anonymity from the fact that she rarely gets more than a mention. Nevertheless, in the following I will try to trace her role(s) in the

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90.   *CTA* 4.II. = *KTU* 1.4.II. = *UT* 51.II. Autograph: *CTA* II, fig.14.

91.   Line 24, *CTA*: *'nt . mḫṣt hm <. m>ḫṣ. KTU*: *'nt mḫṣy hm<. m>ḫṣ. UT*: *hm <m>ḫṣ.* Cf. *CTA*, where the last words of the line are much discussed. The autograph in *CTA* reads : *'nt . mḫṣy i/h □ < > ḫṣ.* Virolleaud (also *CTA*): *im<t>ḫṣ*; Barton (also *CTA*): *mḫṣyh <bm> ḫṣ*; Obermann (also *CTA*): *mḫṣ y<m(t?)>ḫṣ bny h<lm y(t?)lm ṣ>brt aryy.*

92.   The autograph reads: *bnyh□< >brt. CTA* and *KTU*: *bny. hm<. mkly.ṣ>brt. UT*: *bny h< ṣ>brt. CTA* reconstructs *kly* as parallel to *mḫṣ*, cf. *CTA* 5.1.1-2 and 27-28, and 19.196-97 and 201-202.

93.   A number of interesting discussions on Baal could come out of this interpretation. This is not, however, the purpose of the present book, so therefore they will have to wait.

so-called Baal-cycle and in the poem of Keret, where she plays a short, but seemingly important, role.

4.1.2.1. *The Baal-texts.* Four passages in the Baal-texts have Asherah in one of the major roles, namely *CTA* 4.II.1-48; *CTA* 4.III.23-53; *CTA* 4.IV.1-62; and *CTA* 4.V.63-65, which sums up the greater part of the tablet known as *CTA* 4. Apart from these passages, she is only mentioned twice more in these texts, in *CTA* 6.I.39-55 and in *CTA* 8.1-5a.

The prelude to her entry on the scene is found in *CTA* 4.I.1-23. Baal has no palace, but wants one, and in order to obtain it he has to have El's approval. To gain this end, Baal and Anat decide to approach Asherah, and since neither of them are very popular with the lady, they decide to adopt certain measures:

CTA 4.I.21b-23[94]

21.	---- .*šskn m'*	Let there please, be made
22.	*mgn.rbt.aṯrt ym*	a present for Lady Asherah of the Day
23.	*mġẓ.qnyt.ilm*	a gift for the creatress of the gods.

It is Baal, who is speaking here to the god(s) of craftsmen, *kṯr wḫss*, and the present he orders, the *mġẓ*, is a 'mediator'. In Western culture we would probably call it a bribe, but it seems likely that giving a *mġẓ* was the correct thing to do—at least when one was dealing with gods—in Ugarit.

After a section where *kṯr wḫss*'s work is described, comes the next mention of Asherah, and this time she is on the stage herself. The passage, *CTA* 4.II.1-11, has resulted in a number of very different interpretations, and therefore it will be discussed at length.

CTA 4.II.1-11[95]

| 1. | <-->* b/d* <[96] | ?? |
| 2. | □*abn* <[97] | ??[98] |

94.   *CTA* 4.I.21-23 = *KTU* 1.4.I.20-22 = *UT* 51.I.17-19. Autograph: *CTA* II, fig. 14.

95.   *CTA* 4.II. = *KTU* 1.4.II. = *UT* 51.II. Autograph: *CTA* II, fig.14.

96.   *UT*: >*b*< .

97.   *CTA* and *KTU*: *labn. UT*: >*abn*<.

98.   If the legible signs make up one word, and not just part of a larger whole, they could be translated as 'a stone', or as 'our father'. *ARTU* has 'on the stone', and thus translates the *l*, that both *CTA* and *KTU* read in this place.

3.	*aḫdt . plkh <.b ydh>*[99]	She takes a *plk*[100] <in her hand>
4.	*plk . t'lt*[101]. *b<ymnh>*[102]	she raises a *plk* <in her right hand>[103]
5.	*npynh.mks.bšrh*	her *npyn*[104] covers *bšrh*[105]
6.	*tmt'.mdh.bym.*	she *mt'*[106] her *md*[107] in the sea[108]
	ṯn(ṯ) npynh[109]. *bnhrm*	Again her *npyn* in the river[110]
8.	*štt.ḫptr.lišt*	She puts a *ḫptr*[111] on the fire
9.	*ḫbrṯ.lẓr.pḥmm*	a *ḫbrṯ*[112] on live coals
10.	*t'pp <.> tr.il.dpid*	She '*pp*[113] the bull El, who is *pid*.
11.	*tǵzy.bny.bnwt*	she entreats the creator of creatures.

99. *CTA* and *KTU*: <.b ydh>.

100. *plk*: *UT, CARTU, UT, MLC, TO*: 'a distaff or spindle'. *WUS*: 'a wide overdress'. This word, as well as the following ones, that have been transcribed but not translated, are discussed below. The reason for my not translating them here is that the discussion on their actual meaning—in spite of the seeming agreement in the dictionaries—is extensive.

101. *CTA* and *UT*: (*t'/q*)*lt*.

102. The autograph reads: *b*□□ < >. *CTA* and *KTU*: *bymnh*. *UT*: *b ṣm< >*. Virolleaud (also *CTA*): *ymnh*. Van Selms (also *CTA*): *b sm<r>*.

103. Or: 'a *plk*. She rises from the sea...'

104. A *npyn* is probably some kind of clothing, according to *ARTU, MLC* and *WUS*, even if there is no agreement on a more exact designation. *TO* suggests 'feces', a possibility *MLC* also lists. *WUS* gives √*npi, verstossen*, 'to cast off'.

105. *bšr* + (*h*): '(her) body'; *BGUL*: 'to get or bring (good) news'. *b* + *šr* + *h*: preposition + noun + suffix. The noun *šr* could mean: 'prince', 'song', 'navel', 'torch', 'rope', 'line', or 'evil'. Cf. *MLC*: *šr* can likewise be used as a parallel to *špḫ*, 'something soft or woven'.

106. *ARTU*: 'to carry'. *UT*: 'to tear, strip off'. *WUS*: *forttragen*, 'to carry away'. *MLC*: *quitarse*, 'to take off', *despojarse*, 'to undress, give up'. *TO*: *repandre*, 'to pour or, spread out'. Cf. *MLC* and *WUS*: it could be derived from a root similar to Arabic *mata'a*, 'to float or stream'.

107. We are probably once again dealing with some piece of clothing. There is some disagreement concerning the following *ṯn*, as to whether it relates directly to this piece of clothing, which is then laid double (for example, *KML*) or two pieces of clothing (for example, *ARTU*), or whether it tells us that the action (whatever that action is) is repeated.

108. Or, 'to Yam'.

109. *CTA, KTU* and *UT*: *npynh*. The first letter is not discernible on the autograph.

110. Or, 'to Nahar'.

111. Probably some kind of cooking utensil or vessel. *WUS*, however, translates it *Duftmittel*, 'perfume'.

112. See the above note.

113. *CML*: 'fluttered eyelids at'. *TO*: *implorer*. *WUS*: *gefügig machen*.

The first debatable point in this text is the question of where it takes place. Most scholars assume that the action takes place by the sea—Asherah is after all throwing something, ostensibly her laundry, into the sea or river. Why she should also be spinning, cooking and eyeing El from the beach or riverbank is a problem one rarely sees discussed or solved. Even if the word *mt'* should indeed be translated as to 'carry', and she thus carries her laundry (or whatever) to the sea or river,[114] there is no reason whatsoever to suppose that the entire scene takes place there. Apart from this, a myriad of possible interpretations present themselves when one looks closely at the passage.

J.C. de Moor considers this to be Asherah doing her laundry.[115] Del Olmo Lete, for his part, considers this passage to be an *Escena de conjuro*, that is, a scene of conjuration where Asherah, using sympathetic magic, mollifies El.[116] Maier leans in the same direction: he, however, detects sexual overtones (a fertility rite) in the passage, and finds that Asherah is praying to El, in order to make him 'hasten to where she [is] and have conjugal relations with her' (Maier 1986: 33 and 49 n. 48) Finally, Gaster considers Anat, not Asherah, to be the subject of this passage, and finds that Anat in ll. 1-7 disposes of the 'sea-monster Yam', and then starts to prepare gifts for El in the following passage (Gaster 1975: 175ff.). Gaster's interpretation is very interesting; it does however, probably not have a great deal to do with the Ugaritic text. This can be said with few scruples on the basis that no new subject is introduced in l. 12:

> *bnši.'nh.wtphn*   She lifts up her eyes and sees...

In l. 13 we are told that it is Asherah who lifts her eyes, a piece of information one would expect to find in l. 12 if the grammatical subject changed there. If one insisted on reading a subject different from Asherah in ll. 1-11, one could claim that the subject—be it Anat or someone else—looked up and saw Asherah see the arrival of Baal and Anat. This possible interpretation does, however, demand a very peculiar scansion of the text, and creates a number of problems in the translation and interpretation of the text that follows. It seems most natural to assume that Asherah is the subject of the first eleven lines.

The next problem is to try to ascertain exactly what she is doing. As

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114. The word *tmt'* is translated in this vein by *MLC*, *CML* and *WUS*.
115. *ARTU*, 47.
116. *MLC*, 122 and 195.

noted above, a number of possible interpretations present themselves, but unfortunately, most of these interpretations are not directly comparable, since they are founded on different etymologies and interpretations of the key-words of the passage, that is, the words that have not been translated in the above.

The weakest of the interpretations and translations is Gaster's (Gaster 1975). He does not give the Ugaritic text he translates, there is no glossary in his book, and thus no possible means of reconstructing how he reached the results he did. At times it even seems as if he has forgotten to translate one or more word(s), as in ll. 6-7, which in Gaster's version translates, 'and goes chasing him farther into the sea, into the streams'; he apparently disregards the word *npynh* here, although he seemingly translates it as 'her robe' in l. 5.[117]

ARTU has the same deficiency as Gaster. No Ugaritic text is given and there is no glossary in the book, but these are found in *CARTU*, which makes it relatively simple to reconstruct how de Moor came to the conclusions he did.

Gaster builds his thesis around a general theme of ritual drama, and classifies the Baal-poem as a seasonal myth of the comprehensive type. De Moor's interpretation is close to this. He too considers the Baal-texts as a kind of ritual drama, but considers the present text to be a mythological representation of what actually takes place in the spring: that is, that the women can wash their double-skirts clean in the calm rivers at the end of the rainy season.[118] He relates this passage to *CTA* 17.I, the poem of *aqht*, where *aqht* (according to de Moor), as one of his filial duties, washes his father's clothes when the weather is bad.

This is not the appropriate place to discuss de Moor's seasonal thesis at length (de Moor 1971), but it seems improbable that Baal—a thunder-god with fertility associations—should first receive his palace after the rainy season has ended. One would suppose that his rule was at its height during the winter with rain and thunder, and that he therefore received his palace before the start of the rains, not at the end of them. This being said, it does not seem wholly unlikely that de Moor is right in his supposition that Asherah is washing and/or cooking, even if the larger framework is improbable.

117. I am conjecturing here, but it seems as if one has to bend the text quite a bit to achieve the translation Gaster uses.
118. It is difficult to know what de Moor means by a 'double-skirt', perhaps one made of a double layer of cloth?

Maier (1986) considers the passage to be a fertility rite. Unfortunately, he does not tell his readers on what he bases this assumption. That he interprets ll. 10-11 as a prayer is a defendable and understandable stand. I, however, can by no stretch of the imagination find a fertility rite in the text, and therefore must conclude that unless one works from the basic presumption that any ancient text whose content is not immediately understandable to us is a fertility rite with sexual overtones, there is no fertility rite in these lines.

When we finally turn to del Olmo Lete, we find that he considers the passage as describing a magical rite, that is, that Asherah with the use of magic placates El. Del Olmo Lete relates the passage to *CTA* 23.20ff.,[119] which he claims shows use of magic between gods, and to *CTA* 14.I.37ff., which shows how gods react to magic. He is apparently unable to pinpoint the magic more exactly, but claims that it is sympathetic. It seems as if del Olmo Lete wants Asherah at all costs to be associated with magic and witchcraft, since there is nothing in the present text that makes this assumption obvious.

To conclude this review of the four above-mentioned theories concerning this text, it has to be said that none of them are very satisfying. They all presume actions and scenarios that are not in the text itself, and they all leave a number of loose ends. All that can be safely assumed from the text is that some female deity, in all probability Asherah, is doing something, and that she—in order to do whatever it is she does—uses a *plk*, an instrument that is probably a distaff. A distaff is used for one thing, spinning thread. It is not—as claimed by Gaster—a 'woman's standard weapon', and the text at hand does not show that it is brandished as a weapon,[120] neither is the spindle an unambiguous female phallic sexual symbol, whose mere mention suggests promiscuity.[121] On the contrary, the spindle—or distaff—is more often seen as a symbol of a woman's domestic virtues, among which is chastity; in ancient mythologies, Pallas Athena has a spindle as one of

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119. *Sic*, del Olmo Lete seems to have got the line wrong. According to his own translation and interpretation of *CTA* 23, it is in l. 30 that a fertility myth ritual (*Mito-ritual de fertilidad*) starts, and in l. 37 that a fertility rite (*Rito de fertilidad*) starts.

120. Gaster 1975: 176. The only other example he gives (the text at hand being one example) is from 1417 CE, more than 2500 years later than the Ugaritic texts. One could point to the Elkunirsa fragment from Boghazköy, where Asherah might use a distaff as a weapon. On this fragment, see section 4.3.

121. So Margalit 1980: 36. The general idea is maintained in Wiggins 1993: 54.

her numerous symbols, and I am not aware that anyone has taken this to be a hidden reference to her promiscuous behavior. On the contrary, Pallas Athena is considered to be a most virtuous woman, who also does not need to resort to her domestic utensils to fight.[122]

Now, if it is assumed that the subject of the verbs in this passage is using a distaff to spin—a natural assumption—we have to turn the rest of the passage round, in order to see if it is possible to interpret any of the words or sentences in the light of this one piece of information.[123]

When searching for a word that has a root similar to the Ugaritic *npyn* in a Semitic language, the biblical Hebrew נוף comes to mind. נוף has a basic meaning 'to swing round, or to and fro, to swivel', and this is the movement a spindle makes: it turns round, thus spinning the thread, and at the same time it swings gently to and fro. If this etymology is accepted (or a common etymology for נוף and *npyn*), it can be assumed that *npyn* stands in parallel to *plk*, either as a synonym for *plk*, or as a designation for what one produces with a *plk*, namely thread.

A further point of interest here is the alternative reading of *t'lt* in 1.4, namely *qlt*. If this is the correct reading of the word—and both *UT* and *CTA* mention the possibility—then Wiggins's translation 'her spindle whorl' may very well be correct. (Wiggins 1993: 44-48).

The next problematical word is *mks*; this word might be connected to the Akkadian *kâssum*, which means 'to bind' or 'tie up'. Now any number of different types of cloth can be achieved by 'binding' threads together. Knitting is one of the modern versions, but in Bronze Age Europe, a technique for binding and plaiting threads in order to make durable and pretty pieces of clothing, carrying-nets and the like was well known.[124]

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122. For the reference to Pallas Athena, I am grateful to the translator of this book, J-E. McOwan, who reminded me of her.

123. In the following I will try to find roots, words and interpretations that fit into a picture containing the basic assumption: a woman spinning or working with textiles in one way or another. The proposed interpretation is thus in no way 'objective', but is highly tendentious, and is based on a very selective evaluation of etymologies and grammar.

124. Unfortunately, I have been unable to find out what this technique is called in English. In Danish the correct term is *sprang*, and the technique was widely used during the Bronze and Iron Ages.

If we accept that *mks* is here used as a designation for making a piece of clothing, be it by plaiting, *sprang*, a knitting-like technique, or by weaving, we now end up with the combination *b*+*šr*+*h*, preposition, noun and suffix. The word *šr* could, according to *MLC*, be used as a parallel word to *šḥp*, in the sense of 'something soft or woven'.

If all these alternative interpretations are put together and viewed in the greater context, the initial lines of *CTA* 4.II. may be translated as follows:

3.　　She takes her spindle <---->
4.　　She takes a distaff in ?? <---->[125]
5.　　Her thread is woven [or, plaited] into [a piece of] cloth [by/for] her.

The rest of the passage can be translated relatively conventionally, since it is usual to finish the production of a piece of cloth by washing it, and if one wants a piece of windproof and waterproof wool, one fulls it by boiling it and cooling it several times. It does, however, become a bit difficult to fit ll. 10-11 into this context.

If one discards this interpretation as being too far-fetched—and it is, as mentioned above, a very selective reading—one has to find some other explanation for the appearance of a spindle in these lines. If it is not used for spinning, then very few options are left. Gaster's suggestion of its being a weapon is of course still there, but it does not seem satisfactory, just as the interpretation of the spindle as a female phallic symbol seems very forced. Other possible interpretations are that a *plk* is neither a distaff nor a spindle, an opinion that admittedly contradicts the majority of dictionaries and glossaries, or, alternatively, that the *plk* does not belong to these lines, but to ll. 1-2, which are no longer legible.

We could also try to find a interpretative framework that allows for the very abrupt character of this passage. This may be done by understanding an implicit verb, namely, 'can'. If this is the case, then we could be dealing with a list of the many virtues of Asherah, virtues that are named, since these (female) virtues and abilities are the reason why Baal and Anat seek her out.[126] Asherah is full of female virtues:

125. Or cf. Wiggins 1993: 44, 'Her spindle whorl...'
126. When I speak of 'female virtues' and of someone being 'a good woman', 'ideal wife', and so on, my context is that of Bronze Age Ugarit, not twentieth-century Europe.

she can spin, wash, cook or make pottery, and—most important in this connection—she knows how to deal with El, and make him agree to what she wants. If we are indeed dealing with a catalogue of 'the good woman', ll. 10-11 fits perfectly in the context, and the elaboratively argued reinterpretation above becomes unnecessary. The text seems abrupt because it is a list, the only copulative factor being the person performing the different tasks. Furthermore, a list of virtues is not unknown in Ugarit, since the poem of *aqht*, has a catalogue on the virtues of the good son (*CTA* 17.I.25-34). All this having been said, it is necessary to stress that nothing in the text itself gives good reasons for preferring one interpretation over the other; it is impossible to decide with any certainty exactly what this passage is all about.

The next sequence, *CTA* 4.II.12-27, tells of Asherah's reaction when she sees Baal and Anat approaching her. She becomes frightened. Her knees buckle, sweat breaks out all over her, she starts shaking violently. Rightly so perhaps: as the mother of gods, she has no reason to be overjoyed by a visit from 'the killers of her sons' (cf. section 4.1.1.5). She shouts to them, asking what they want, and her panic recedes when she gets a glimpse of the 'mediators' Baal and Anat have brought:

CTA 4.II.26-30[127]

<ẓl> ksp aṯrt[128] (27) kt'n	Then Asherah sees a <glimpse> of silver
ẓl[129].ksp.wn□□[130] (28) ḫrṣ	A glimpse of silver and ??? gold
šmḫ rbt.a<ṯrt> [131] (29) ym	Lady Asherah of the Day rejoices.
gm.lġlmh.k<tṣḥ>	She calls to her servant:
(30) 'n.mkṯr.apt<	Look! from kṯr ???<[132]

The rest of the column is so fragmentary that it is not possible to make a sound reconstruction of what happens next; most scholars,

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127. *CTA* 4.II = *KTU* 1.4.II = *UT* 51.II. Autograph: *CTA* II, fig.14.

128. *CTA* and *KTU*: aryy<ẓl>.ksp.<a>ṯrt. *UT*: aryy< >.ksp. <aṯ>rt. Autograph: aryy < >ksp□□rt.

129. Or p'l. *CTA*, *KTU* and *UT* as noted above.

130. *CTA*: wn<b>t. *KTU*: wn< >xx. *UT*: wn< >. Provided the text actually reads ẓl, the following corrections have been proposed: *CTA*, wn<r>; Gaster (also *CTA*): wn<zm>, wn<qdt> or wn<qb>; Obermann (also *CTA*): n<ght> derived from √ngh, 'to read'.

131. *CTA* and *UT*: a<ṯrt>. *KTU*: aṯ<rt>. Autograph: a/n < >.

132. For a description of what kṯr wḫss has made, see *CTA* 4.I.25-43, or the translation: *ARTU*, pp. 45-46 or *MLC*, pp. 193-94.

however, do not balk at the prospect. De Moor thinks that Asherah orders her fisherman, *qdš wamrr*, to start fishing, something that—according to de Moor's seasonal hypothesis—took place in March, after the winter's pause. After this, she sits down with Baal and Anat, and tries to persuade Baal to release one of his imprisoned enemies, perhaps Yam (*ARTU*, pp. 48-50).

Gaster's reconstruction is slightly different. He thinks that Asherah asks *qdš wamrr* to catch the sea-dragon (Yam), so that he will no longer bother Baal and Anat. He likewise sees the beginning of the next column as a warning to Baal and Anat; they should be careful not to release Yam again (Gaster 1975: 177-78).

Del Olmo Lete, for his part, thinks that Asherah, after her joy upon seeing the gifts, becomes frightened again, and sends *qdš wamrr* off to fetch Yam, who will defend her against Baal and Anat (*MLC* 123 and 196). Each of the above mentioned reconstructions is based on the scholars' own interpretation of the Baal-texts, and it is impossible to either prove or disprove any of them since the legible part of the column does not give much evidence on which to build a case.

The next passages of interest to us with regard to Asherah are *CTA* 4.III.23-53, all of *CTA* 4.IV and *CTA* 4.V.1-3. The beginning of *CTA* 4.III describes how Baal laments the fact that he has no palace. Without any kind of link between the scenes, Baal and Anat arrive[133] to enlist Asherah's help in their plan to get Baal a palace:

CTA 4.III.27-36[134]

27. *wt'n.rbt.atrt ym*	And Lady Asherah of the Day answers:
28. *ik.tmgnn.*	Why do you two beseech
rbt (29) *atrt.ym.*	Lady Asherah of the Day,
tǵzyn (30) *qnyt.ilm.*	entreat the creatress of gods?
mgntm (31) *tr.il.dpid.*	You (should) beseech the Bull, El who is *pid*,
hm.ǵztm(32)*bny.bnwt*	or entreat the creator of creatures.
wt'n (33) *btlt*[135]. *'nt.*	And virgin Anat answers:
nmgn (34) *<->m.*[136]	We beseech ??
rbt.atrt.ym	Lady Asherah of the Day

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133. *CTA* 4.III.23-24: *mǵy.aliyn.b'l* / *mǵyt.btlt. 'nt: aliyn* Baal arrives, the virgin Anat arrives.

134. *CTA* 4.III. = *KTU* 1.4.III = *UT* 51.III. Autograph: *CTA* II, fig.15.

135. *CTA, KTU* and *UT: btlt.* Autograph: □*tlt.*

136. *CTA, UT* and autograph: *<->m. KTU: xm. CML: <u>m.*

| 35. | <nǵ>ẓ[137].qnyt.ilm | entreat the creatress of gods |
| 36. | < >[138].nmgm.hwt | < > we entreat (him) |

If the above thesis is maintained—that Asherah is presented as the ideal wife and mother, her answer is the perfect one. A good woman knows her place, and does not propose to tell any man in the family, be he brother, father, husband, uncle or grown son, what to do. Naturally a mere woman should not meddle in the important affairs of men. Anat's answer has been obliterated by a lacuna, so it must therefore remain unresolved whether they had already approached El without success, or whether they started by discussing the matter with Asherah, because they wished her to approach El on Baal's behalf. The column ends with a fragmentary, but recognizable description of a meal (or sacrifice), consisting of meat and wine, and ends with some completely disintegrated lines.

The next column, *CTA* 4.IV, deals with Asherah's journey to El, her reception and her dealings with El regarding Baal's palace.

CTA 4.IV.4b-19[139]

4.	(atrt y<m)mdl'r>[140]	Saddle an ass,
5.	ṣmd.phl.<št	prepare <the Lady's> donkey
	gpnm dt[141] (6)ksp.	(with) the bridle[142] of silver
	dt.yr<q nqbnm>[143]	(with) the gol<den saddle>
7.	'db.gpn.atn<y[144]	make ready the harness of my she-ass.
8.	yšm'.qd[š].wamr[r][145]	Qdš-and-Amrr hears,
9.	mdl.'r.	he saddles the ass,
	ṣmd.phl (10) št.	he prepares the Lady's donkey
	gpnm.dt.ksp	(with) the bridle of silver
11.	dt.yrq.nqbnm	(with) the golden saddle,

137. *CTA*: <nǵ>ẓ. *KTU* and *UT*: <n>ǵẓ. Autograph: < >□.

138. *CTA* and *UT*: < >. *KTU*: < >x . *CML*: <aḫr>. Autograph: < >□.

139. *CTA* 4.IV. = *KTU* 1.4.IV. = *UT* 51.IV. Autograph: *CTA* II, fig.15 + 16. The first three lines are too fragmentary to read.

140. *CTA* and *KTU*: atrt.ym<.mdl.'r>. *UT* has the same text, but thinks that more letters are missing between ym and mdl.

141. *CTA*: <št.gpnm.dt>. *KTU* and *UT*: š<t.gpnm.dt>. Autograph: .□< >.

142. Both 'bridle' and 'saddle' are modern terms, used as synonyms for 'necessary equipment when one wants to ride on a donkey, without sitting on its bare back'. There is no certainty that the words do indeed denote the objects here mentioned.

143. *CTA*: yr<q.nqbnm>. *KTU* and *UT*: yrq<.nqbnm>. Autograph: yr□ <.

144. *CTA* and *KTU*: atnt<y>. *UT*: atnt<k/y>. Autograph: atn□<.

145. *CTA*, *KTU* and *UT*: qd<š>.wamr<r>. Autograph: yšm'.qd. wamr< .

12.	'*db.gpn.atnth*[146]	he makes ready the harness of her she-ass.
13.	*yḥbq.qdš.wamrr*	*Qdš-and-Amrr* helps,
14.	*yštn.atrt.lbmt.'r*	he sets Asherah on the back of the ass,
15.	*lysmsmt.bmt.pḥl*	on the beautifully decorated back of the donkey.
16.	*qdš.yuḥdm. šb'r*	*Qdš* holds, he leads the way[147]
17.	*amrr.kkbkb.lpnm*	*Amrr* shines like a star in front,
18.	*atr.btlt.'nt*	behind is virgin Anat,
19.	*wb'l.tb'.mrym.ṣpn*	and Baal returns to the high land of Zaphon.

Asherah seems to be the only god(dess) in the Ugaritic pantheon, who has need of any outside help in order to move from one point to another. Other gods turn their faces towards wherever they want to go, and arrive, but Asherah goes on a donkey, demurely led by a servant, and followed—in this instance—by minor, or lower-ranking deities. This passage could tell us something of Asherah's high rank. She does not move on her own, not because she is unable to, but rather because it is not fitting for a Lady of her standing.

CTA 4.IV.23-26

23.	*tgly.šd il.wtbu*	she goes to the territory of El and she arrives
24.	*qrš.mlk.ab. šnm*	at the abode of the king, the father of years.[148]
25.	*lp'n*[149]*.il.thbr.wtql*	She bends and lies at El's feet,
26.	*tšthwy.wtkbdh*	she prostrates herself and honors him.

As soon as she arrives, she throws herself at the feet of El and honors him, 'gives him heaviness' (*kbd*). She behaves in a proper way for a subject approaching a great king, and is sufficiently humble, the way a good woman should be when confronting male supremacy.

CTA 4.IV.27-39

27.	*hlm.il.kyphnh*	As soon as El sees her,
28.	*yprq.lṣb.wyṣḥq*	he opens his mouth and laughs.
29.	*p'nh*[150]*.lhdm.ytpd.*	He sets his foot on the footstool
	wykrkr[151] (30) *uṣb'th.*	and turns his fingers round.
	yšu.gh.wy<ṣḥ>[152]	He lifts his voice and sho<uts>:

146. *CTA, KTU* and *UT: atnth.* Autograph: *atnt*□.
147. Or, 'he lights'.
148. Or, cf. section 4.1.1.1. 'father of lights'.
149. Or *lẓn*.
150. Or *ẓnh*.
151. *CTA, KTU* and *UT: wykrkr.* Autograph: *w*□*krkr*.
152. *CTA* and *UT: wy<ṣḥ>. KTU: w yṣ<ḥ>.*

31. *ik.mǵyt.rbt.atr<t.y>m*[153]	Why has Asherah, Lady Day come?
32. *ik.atwt.qnyt.i<lm>*[154]	Why has the creatress of the gods arrived?
33. *rǵb.rǵbt.wtǵt< >*[155]	If you are very hungry and want <to eat>
34. *hm.ǵmu.ǵmit.w's< >*[156]	If you are very thirsty and want <to drink>
35. *lhm.hm.štym.*	Eat or drink!
lh<m>[157] (36) *btlhnt.lhm*	Eat of the food on the tables!
št<y>[158] (37) *bkrpnm.yn.*	Drink of the wine in the cups!
bk<s>.hrs[159] (38) *dm.'ṣm.*	blood of the trees from a golden beaker.
hm.yd.il mlk (39) *yhssk.*	Or is it the hand of the king, of El, that excites
ahbt tr.[160]*t'rrk*	you[161] the love of the Bull that arouses you?

This passage has given rise to a number of different interpretations. Pope finds reason to believe that El and Asherah have a strained relationship,[162] an idea that de Moor takes up,[163] whereas Gaster finds that El wants to protect Asherah with his love, and sees the passage as an example of the tender feelings between them.[164]

If we maintain the above mentioned interpretative framework, that is, Asherah as 'the ideal wife/woman', there is no reason to believe that she and El are estranged. We do not learn anything about any sexual relations between them, here or in any other text, but we could be forgiven for thinking that this is what El is leading up to. Nothing in this, or the following passages, gives grounds for reading anything

153. *CTA*, *KTU* and *UT*: *atr<t.y>m*. Autograph: *atr< >m*.

154. *CTA*, *KTU* and *UT*: *i<lm>*. Autograph: *i<*.

155. *CTA*: *wtǵt <??>*. *KTU* and *UT*: *wtǵt< >*. Autograph: *w□□t□*.

156. *CML* and Gaster (also *CTA*): *w's<t>*. Barton (also *CTA*): *w's< '>*. Autograph: *w's<*.

157. *CTA*, *KTU* and *UT*: *lh<m>*. Autograph: *l□< >*.

158. *CTA*: possibly *št<y>*. *UT*: *št<y>*. Autograph: *št< >*.

159. *CTA*, *KTU* and *UT*: *yn bk<s>.hrs*. The autograph reads *bk.h□g*. We are probably dealing with a scribal error, supposing the correct letter to be an *ṣ*. We could also be dealing with a lacuna after the first wedge of the third letter, which permits us to conjecture a *g*, *ṣ* or *l*.

160. *KTU* and *UT*: *ahbt.tr*. Autograph: *ahbttr*.

161. Or, 'that you are reminded of'. *hss* has the basic meaning of 'to think, remind', 'remember'.

162. Pope 1955: 37: 'It is apparent that El and Asherah, although on ostensibly friendly terms, are maritally estranged'.

163. *ARTU*, 53 n. 235: 'Note the irony in the choice of words. Ilu is depicted here as an old charmer whose overtures are brusquely ignored.'

164. Gaster 1975: 118: 'with typical Oriental hospitality, he proffers food and drink and assures her of his benevolent protection'.

but an 'ordinary' marriage into it. It certainly does seem as if Asherah knows what she is doing, since she in the following lines achieves her (or rather, Baal's) object, and gets El's permission to build a Palace for Baal. The passage starts with Asherah flattering El—or approaching El with due respect:

CTA 4.IV.40-43

40.	*wt'n.rbt.atrt ym*	And Lady Asherah of the Day answers,
41.	*thmk.il. hkm.*	Your word [decree], El, is wise,
	hkmt (42) *'m 'lm.*	[it is] wise in eternity.
	hyt. hzt[165] (43) *thmk.*	[May] your word [be/give/have] a happy life.

I cannot detect any irony in these lines. This is the proper way for an ideal wife to approach her husband, and even more appropriate for a subject entering the presence of her sovereign. It is, however, impossible to either prove or disprove the use of irony in texts like this.

Now Asherah puts the case to El. Baal is king, but does not have a proper dwelling for himself or his daughters. The presentation consists mostly of standard phrases, but does contain an interesting contradiction:

CTA 4.IV.47-57

47.	*<an> lysh*[166]*.tr il.abh*	He [Baal] calls on the bull El, his father,
48.	*<il> mlk*[167] *dyknnh.*	The god-king who made him.
	ysh (49) *atrt*[168]*.wbnh.*	He calls on Asherah and her son[s],
	ilt.wsbrt (50) *<ar>yh*[169]	the goddess and all her kin,
	wn.in.bt.lb'l	for [there is] no house for Baal
51.	*km ilm*[170]	such as gods [have][171]
	whzr[172]*kbn.atrt*	and no court such as the son[s] of Asherah [has][173]
52.	*mtb il mzll.bnh*	The dwelling of El is the shelter of his son[s]

165. Or *hp't*.
166. *CTA* and *KTU*: *<an>y<.>lysh*. *UT*: *any*, given as uncertain. Autograph: *<□□□□>ysh*.
167. *CTA, KTU* and *UT*: *<i>l.mlk*. Autograph: *< >□ mlk*.
168. *CTA, KTU* and *UT*: *atrt*. Autograph: *□□rt*.
169. *CTA, KTU* and *UT*: *aryh*. Autograph: *□□yh*.
170. *CTA, KTU* and *UT*: *km ilm*. Autograph: *□□ilm*.
171. Or, 'such as El (has)'.
172. Or *whp'r*.
173. It is usual to translate *bn atrt* with a plural, 'the sons of Asherah', but in the light of the discussion below, it might be more to the point to translate it in the singular.

53.	<*mt̠*>*b rbt*[174].*at̠rt.ym*	<The dwel>ling of Lady Asherah of the Day
54.	<*mt̠b*>[175].*klt.knyt*	<is the dwelling> of the beautiful women
55.	*mt̠b. pdry.bt ar*	[it is] the dwelling of *Pdry*, daughter of *Ar*,
56.	*mz̠ll t̠ly bt rb*[176]	the shelter of *T̠ly*, daughter of *Rb*,
57.	*mt̠b arṣ<y> bt y'bdr*[177]	the dwelling of *Arṣ<y>* daughter of *Y'bdr*.

The contradiction or point of interest lies in the apparent conflict between ll. 47-51 and ll. 52-57. In ll. 47-51 Baal laments because he has no house as do the son(s) of Asherah, the gods (*ilm*), whereas ll. 52-57 tells us that the son(s) of El, *il*, live(s) with him, sons we would presume to be identical to 'the gods', or at least some of the gods, and not on their own. The only logical solution must be that the sons of El are *not* to be identified with the gods, and if this is the case, *ilm* in l. 51 has to be translated differently. We could assume that the final *mem* of *ilm* is an enclitic, and not a plural ending, which obliges the translation 'such as El' and not 'such as the gods'. This then opens up the interesting possibility that El is the son of Asherah, since the parallel is *il-m // bn at̠rt*. That Baal was not regarded as one of El's sons, in any sense, is seen from his epithet *bn dgn*, son of Dagan, a god not otherwise mentioned in any of the major epic texts from Ugarit.

If then El, the king, is one of Asherah's sons, and has a palace, where *his* sons can live, then Baal's wish for a palace or court of his own becomes a reflection of the position he has achieved:

CTA 4.IV.43-44

43.	...*mlkn.aliy<n>*	*aliyn* [is] our king,
	b'l[178] (44) *t̠pt̠n*	Baal [is] our judge.

Baal, like El, is now a king, and wants a visible manifestation of his royal status, like the sons of Asherah, and he approaches both the ruling king—El—and El's consort/mother (?) Asherah. The passage does not become less interesting when one looks at the fragment *CTA* 8, which can be regarded as one of the Baal-texts. In this text, it is not El who can grant or withhold the building permission, but rather Asherah herself:

174. *CTA, KTU* and *UT*: *mt̠b rbt*. Autograph: □□*brbt*.
175. *CTA, KTU* and *UT*: *mt̠b*. Autograph: <*m*-->.
176. *CTA, KTU* and *UT*: *mz̠ll.t̠ly*<.>*bt rb*. Autograph: *m*□< >*l t̠/h l*□*btrb*.
177. *CTA, KTU* and *UT*: *mt̠b.arṣ<y>*. Autograph: *m*□*b*< >*arṣ*.
178. *CTA, KTU* and *UT*: *aliy<n> b'l*. Autograph: *aliy*< > □'*l*.

CTA 8.1-5a[179]

1.	*ik mgn*[180]*.rbt aṯrt*(2)*<ym>*[181]	Then he gives [gifts] to Lady Asherah of the Day,
	mǵẓ.qnyt.ilm	He entreats the creatress of gods.
3.	*wtn bt*[182]*.lbʿl.km* (4) *<i>lm*[183]	And she gives[184] Baal a house like El/gods [has/have],
	wḥẓr.kbn(5)*<a>ṯrt*[185]	a court like the son[s] of Asherah.

It is possible, not only in this passage, but in all parallel passages, to translate *ilm // bn aṯrt* as El // the son of Asherah, and if this is done, it will probably become necessary to revise the standard interpretations of rank and order among the Ugaritic gods. On the basis of this, one could imagine a system analogous to Greek mythology, with Asherah being a goddess similar to the Greek Rhea. Both Greek and Ugaritic mythology know of three 'kings' (before Baal arrives), who are all sons of Rhea/Asherah: Zeus/El, the god of the heavens, Poseidon/Yam, the god of the sea and Hades/Mot, the god of the underworld.[186] This trio of male gods each have their own palace, as a visible representation of their power. Each of them is a ruler and is not subordinate to any other god. This also gives the reason for El's, Yam's and Mot's reluctance to let Baal become king. Each of them has to part with some of his power in order to contribute to the trio becoming a quartet.

The present text ends with Asherah getting her way. If the mother of the trio (= Asherah) does not object to Baal 'taking over' (partially), then El is not one to stand in the way of it. He is not overly pleased by the prospect, but, if Asherah wants it, so be it:

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179. *CTA* 8 = *KTU* 1.8 = *UT* 51 fragment. Autograph: *CTA* II, fig. 30.
180. *CTA*: *<i>k.mgn. KTU*: *ik.mgn. UT*: *ik mgn*. Autograph: □*kmgn*.
181. *CTA* and *UT*: *<ym>. KTU*: *<y>m*. Autograph: < >.
182. *CTA* and *KTU*: *wtn bt. UT*: *w?tn*. Autograph: □*tnbt*.
183. *CTA* and *UT*: *<i>lm. KTU*: *ilm*. Autograph: < >*lm*.
184. Or possibly, 'that she may give (him)'.
185. *CTA* and *UT*: *<a>ṯrt. KTU*: *aṯrt*. Autograph: < >*ṯrt*.
186. I am perfectly aware that analogies like these are pure speculation.

CTA 4.IV(+V).58-65[187]

58.	*wy'n ltpn il dpi<d>*[188]	And *ltpn*, El who is *pid* answers:
59.	*p'bd.an. 'nn.atrt*	Then I am a slave,[189] a servant of Asherah,
60.	*p'bd.ank.ahd ult*[190]	then I am a slave [who should] take a *ult*?[191]
61.	*hm.amt.atrt.tlbn*	If Asherah's maid[192] [will] make the bricks,
62.	*lbnt ybn.bt.lb'l*[193]	then a house will be built for Baal
63.	*km ilm.*	such as the gods/El [have]
	whzr.kbn.atrt	and a court like the sons of Asherah.
64.	*wt'n.rbt.atrt ym*	And Lady Asherah of the Day answers:
65.	*rbt.ilm.lhkmt*	Great is your wisdom El.

El's mood in this text seems difficult to gauge. Is he being ironic, teasing, sullen or matter of fact? We do not know. What seems to be implied is that El might be the one who has to start the proceedings of building Baal's palace, but it is not he who actually decides whether it is to be built or not. His yea is not unimportant, but he seems to be more like a rubber-stamp on Asherah's decision, than the person making the independent decision. This is an impression that is strengthened in the next passage from the Baal-texts to be discussed here, namely,

CTA 6.I.39-55[194]

39.	*tšu.gh.wtṣh.*	She[195] lifts up her voice, and she calls out:
	tšmh ht (40) *atrt.wbnh.*	Now Asherah and her sons rejoice,
	ilt.wṣb (41) *rt.aryh.*	the goddess and all her kin,
	kmt.aliyn (42) *b'l.*	For dead is *aliyn* Baal,
	khlq.zbl.	destroyed is the prince,

187. *CTA* 4.V. is a direct continuation of *CTA* 4.IV. Column V therefore starts with l. 63.

188. *CTA*, *KTU* and *UT*: *wy'n ltpn il dpid*.

189. *'bd* covers, in most Semitic languages, all degrees of subordinate position. Thus, any subject of a king, from the wealthiest nobleman to the scurviest slave was the king's *'bd*.

190. *CTA* and *KTU*: *ahd.ult*.

191. Some kind of tool used in house-building. *UT*: 'trowel or hod'; an implement or tool. *CARTU*: 'a form for making bricks'. *KML*: 'to roll in mud, to knead'.

192. Or, 'if Asherah becomes a maid...'

193. *CTA*, *KTU* and *UT*: *lbnt.ybn.bt.lb'l*. Autograph: *lbnty□n.b□□lb'l*.

194. *CTA* 6.I.39-53 = *KTU* 1.6.I.39-53 = *UT* 49.I.12-25. Autograph. *CTA* II, fig. 21, ll. 11-25.

195. The speaker, 'she', is Anat, until l.43.

b'l (43) *arṣ*	the lord of the earth[196]
gm[197]*.yṣḥ il*	El cries out,
44. *lrbt.aṯrt ym.*	to Lady Asherah of the Day:
šm' (45) *lrbt.a<ṯrt> ym.*[198]	Hear [me], O Lady Asherah of the day.
tn (46) *aḥd.b.b<nk> amlkn*[199]	Give [me] one of <your> so<ns>, [and] I will make him king.
47. *wt'n.rbt.aṯrt ym*	And Lady Asherah of the day answers:
48. *bl.nmlk.yd'.ylḥn*[200]	Shall we not make into king, someone knowing and *lḥn*[201]
49. *wy'n.lṭpn.il <dp>i*[202] (50) *d.*	And *lṭpn*, El who is *pid*, answers:
dq.anm.lyrẓ[203] (51) *'m.b'l.*	[one having] small vigour, will not rule as Baal,
ly'db.mrḥ (52) *'m.bn.dgn.ktmsm*	[someone who can] not lift the spear [like] the son of Dagan, will be crushed.
53. *w'n*[204]*.rbt.aṯrt ym*	And Lady Asherah of the Day answered:
54. *blt.nmlk.'ṯtr.'rẓ*	Should we not make *'ṯtr*, the terrible, a king
55. *ymlk.'ṯtr.'rẓ*	let *'ṯtr*, the terrible, be king.

Some new information is brought to light in this section. The first piece of information is that the god *'ṯtr* is named as one of Asherah's sons. She does not directly say 'my son Aštar', but since she proposes him when asked to name one of her sons as king, it can safely be stated that *'ṯtr* is indeed one of Asherah's sons. The next piece of information has a bearing on the status and function of Asherah in Ugarit. After the initial, formula-like lament of Anat, the focus changes to El, who asks Asherah to name one of her sons as the (new) king. This she does, but not to the full satisfaction of El. It is, however, her choice

196. Or 'the Baal of the earth'. Cf. perhaps the passage *CTA* 6.V.1-6.

197. Thus the autograph. *CTA* and *KTU*: *arš.gm.*

198. *CTA* and *KTU*: *aṯr<t> ym*. *UT*: *a<ṯrt> ym*. Autograph: *a< > □m*.

199. *CTA*: *b.bnk<.>amlkn*. *KTU*: *b.bnk.am.lkn*. *UT*: *b.bnk* (?) *wamlkn*. Virolleaud (also *CTA*): *b b<nm>k amlkn*. Bauer (also *CTA*): *b b<ny>k*. Ginsberg (also *CTA*): *b b<nk> kamlkn*. Autograph: *b<--->amlkn*.

200. *CTA*, *KTU* and *UT*: *ylḥn*. Autograph: *yl□n*. The penultimate sign could be a *ṭ*.

201. The root √*lḥn* is translated as follows: *CARTU*: 'to moisten'; *CML, MLC* and *UT*: 'to be intelligent'; *WUS*: *dienstfertig* ('obliging').

202. *CTA* and *KTU*: *il dpi*. *UT*: *il d<p>i*. Autograph: *il <->□*. There is not sufficient room on the tablet to write both *d* and *p* in what seems to be a lacuna.

203. *KTU*: *lyrq/?*. Autograph: *lyrẓ*. The text could also read *lyrp'*.

204. *CTA*, *KTU* and *UT*: *w'n*. Autograph: *□'n*.

rather than his protests that win the day.[205] That Aštar seems to retire quickly is irrelevant in this connection.

There are two possible ways to interpret these happenings. One is to stress the fact that it seems to be Asherah, not El, who has the right to choose which of the gods is to be king, the second is to emphasize the unsuitability of her choice, thus seeing her as a silly mother, putting forward her incompetent pet. The latter option does not negate the former. Without any evaluation of the suitability of her choice, she is the decisive factor.

If we focus on the first option—that it is Asherah who wields the right to name the king—this throws a new light on why Baal and Anat approach her, not El, in *CTA* 4.II. In *CTA* 3.V Anat approaches El, with dire threats, in order to obtain a palace for Baal, without success. The palace is not commissioned until Asherah has given her permission and has approached El on the subject. Since the building of a palace and the status of kingship seem to be closely connected in Ugarit, it appears likely that the reason for their (Baal's and Anat's) approach might not be—as most of us have hitherto suspected—that Asherah should gain El's permission for them, but that it was *her* permission that was the crucial point.

If this is the case, then Asherah is not primarily 'the perfect woman' or 'ideal wife', but a far more powerful lady. Perhaps her very power lies in the fact that she is the creatress of gods, not only the 'minor' ones, but El as well, and as such the *de facto* ruler.[206] All this taken together gives credence to Wiggins's interpretation of her title *rbt*. He considers her to be *rabitu*, mother of the king or dowager queen, the real power behind the throne, whose primary function was that of naming and legitimizing the king and/or heir to the throne.[207]

Analogously, it seems possible that the *ilt*, called upon in *CTA* 1.IV is Asherah. My basic objection to including this text in a discussion on Asherah, however, still stands. The automatic equation between

205. We are also told implicitly that being *yd'*, 'knowing', and *lḥn*, seems to have been traits that characterized *'ṭtr*, perhaps even were seen as regular epithets, to an extent where El can start an argument about the suitability of him as a successor to Baal.

206. Thus she is also understood as the creator of second or third generation-gods, even if she is not actually their mother, due to her primal creation of the gods as such.

207. Wiggins 1993: 65-67 and elsewhere.

Asherah and *ilt* is simply not tenable, not even when the similarities between *CTA* 1.IV and the present text are considered. Since nothing in the legible parts of *CTA* 1.IV itself gives us the slightest clue as to the identity of the *ilt* called upon, or even certain information with regard to her part in the proceedings, I still see no reason to include it.

This then leaves us with a puzzle. If Asherah—as argued above—is the real power in the Ugaritic pantheon, why is she then (also) depicted as 'the perfect woman' or 'ideal wife'? I do not pretend to be able to present any decisive argumentation: my suggestions are only tentative. One possibility is that my original proposal of her being positioned as 'the perfect woman' is wrong, another that the combination gave rise to no comment in ancient Ugarit. A woman was a woman was a woman. Regardless of her status, a woman still bowed before the male of the species, and a goddess was—irrespective of the actual power she wielded—seen as subordinate to the ruling male god. The actual distribution of power was one thing, proper behavior another. As such she had to observe the rules pertaining to women in general. Even the queen or the queen-dowager bows to the king.

4.1.2.2. *Summary: Asherah in the Baal-texts.* As far as I can see, the only possible conclusion to reach is that there is surprisingly little stated in the texts themselves. Most of the relevant information is indirect: Asherah is not just a wonderful ally when one wants to obtain a favor from El, she herself seems to be the person to make decisions regarding kingship. She is a smart tactician (or just 'the perfect woman'). She is not on the best of terms with Baal and Anat, but her unfriendly attitude can be changed by the use of bribes and flattery. She has (at least) two servants (or rather one servant who happens to be two), *qdš wamrr*, apparently her general factotum, who might or might not be a Ugaritic version of the god Amurru, and she likewise seems to employ a fisherman (or men), *dgy aṯrt*. What we are not told *anywhere* at all is that El and Asherah are married. On the other hand, the texts imply—without stating it directly—that Asherah is the mother, not only of Yam and Mot, but of El as well, and that these then are (some of) the gods that are *bn aṯrt*.

The hypothesis of Asherah as the 'ideal woman' or 'the perfect wife' discussed above is, like most hypotheses about what exactly is implied in the epic texts from Ugarit, impossible to either prove or disprove. It is nevertheless interesting that Wiggins reaches a conclu-

sion similar to mine, but from a different angle. He sees Asherah as a *rabitu*, a queen mother, whose primary function lies in her being the consort of the ruling sovereign, that is, El, and as (honorary) mother of all gods.[208] Since the tablets themselves are often seriously damaged and in bad shape, it is possible to conjecture wildly in most cases (a common phenomenon), but even if we had the perfect tablets, it seems doubtful that they would give much more information on the subject. It seems obvious that *ilmlk* presumed that his audience knew these gods and goddesses and were familiar with their functions, he then told good stories about them, but this basic knowledge—so very familiar to the Ugaritic audience—is lost to us.

4.1.2.3. *The Poem of Kirta*.[209] Three passages in the poem of *Kirta* refer to Asherah: one of these, *CTA* 14.IV.197-206, has already been discussed above in section 4.1.1.4. The other passages are as follows:

CTA 15.II.21-28[210]

25.	*lk.tld.yṣb ǵlm < >*[211]	To you (*Kirta*), she (*ḥry*) will bear the boy *yṣb*.
26.	*ynq.ḥlb.a<t̠>rt< >*[212]	He will drink the milk of Asherah < >
27.	*mṣṣ.t̠d btlt <'nt>*[213]	he will suck the nipple of the virgin <Anat>[214]
28.	*mšnq<t.ilm>*[215]	the wetnurse<s of the gods>.

Asherah is here presented in a new role—as one of two wetnurses of the gods. Apparently these two women, that is Asherah and Anat,

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208. Wiggins 1993: 63 and elsewhere. Further indications that this is indeed one of her main functions in the epic and mythological texts from Ugarit (and thus not necessarily in everyday religious life), might be found in *CTA* 3.I.10-15, see below, section 4.1.2.4. See also section 7.1. on the etymology of 'Asherah'.

209. For a more thorough discussion of the general story-line of this poem and its genre, see Wiggins 1993: 21-27.

210. *CTA* 15.II. = *KTU* 1.15.II = *UT* 128.II. = *RS* nr. 3.45. Autograph: *CTA* II, fig. 39.

211. *CTA* and *KTU*: *yšb<.>ǵlm. UT*: *yšb. ǵlm.* Autograph: *yš□ǵlm< >.*

212. *CTA*, *KTU* and *UT*: *ḥlb.a<t̠>rt.* Autograph: *ḥ□b.a< >rt < >.*

213. *CTA*, *KTU* and *UT*: *t̠d.btlt.<'nt>.* Autograph: *t̠d□tlt< >.*

214. It is usual to reconstruct the name of Anat in this place, a custom I too have followed. One could also reconstruct *špš* in this lacuna, in which case this text might be seen as reinforcing my above argument (section 4.1.1.1, on the text *CTA* 23), that is, that both Asherah and *špš* are goddesses with solar characteristics, and that they were seen as having parallel functions.

215. *UT* and Van Selms (also *CTA*): *mšnq<t ilm n'mm>.* Virolleaud (also *CTA*): *mšnq<t >.* Ginsberg (also *CTA*): *mšnq<t' ilm >.* Autograph: *mšnq< >.*

not only bring up gods but also take care of special human children. Nothing else is to be learned from this passage regarding Asherah.

CTA 15.III.25b-30[216]

	.wt*h*ss.at*r*t[217] (26) ndrh.	And Asherah remembered his promise
	wilt.□<[218]	and the goddess ??<
27.	wt*š*u.gh.w<t*ṣh*>[219]	And she lifts her voice and <shouts
28.	ph m'.ap.k<rt[220]	See now, how k<rt...
29.	u*t*n.ndr<[221]	*two* promises[222] <
30.	apr.h/i<[223]	I will break <

The text is too fragmentary to allow any certain information. We only learn that *Kirta* seems to have given Asherah not one, but two promises. The usual—qualified—guess is that *Kirta* has forgotten the promises, and that the disasters befalling him in the remainder of the poem are due to this fact. This is, however, only a guess.

4.1.2.4. *Other Mythological Texts.* The last mythological text to be discussed in this chapter is *CTA* 3.I.10-15. The passage is very difficult both to scan and translate, therefore the following suggestions should by no means be seen as authoritative or definite, but only as tentative proposals.

CTA 3.I.10-15[224]

10.	y*t*n.ks.bdh	He gives (him) a cup in his hand,
11.	krpnm[225].bklat.ydh	a goblet into both his hands;

216. *CTA* 15.III = *KTU* 1.15.III = *UT* 128.III = *RS* 3.45. Autograph: *CTA* II, fig. 40.

217. *CTA, KTU* and *UT*: a*t*rt. Autograph: a□□t.

218. *CTA* and *UT*: p< >. Ginsberg (also *CTA*): p<lih>. Autograph: □< >.

219. *CTA, KTU* and *UT*: w<t*ṣh*>. Autograph: w< >.

220. *CTA, KTU* and *UT*: kr<t >. Virolleaud (also *CTA*): ap k<rt *t*'(?) >. Ginsberg (also *CTA*): ap kr<t ypr> (29) u *t*n nd<rm mlk>. Autograph: k□<.

221. *CTA, KTU* and *UT*: ndr< >. Autograph: nd□< >.

222. u is here seen as an emphatic particle.

223. *KTU*: i(??)xx< >. *UT*: h< >.

224. *CTA* 3.I. = *KTU* 1.3.I = *UT* '*NT*. Autograph: *CTA* II, fig.7.

225. *CTA* writes that the text apart from the readable n has preserved two vertical wedges that seems to be written on top of the n. *KTU* reads krpnm, and thinks that there is a scribal error, kprmm, which was then corrected by writing an n on top of the already existing m. *UT*: krpnm. Autograph: krp□m.

12.	*bk rb.ʿẓm.*[226]	the huge beaker of the strong one,
	ridn (13) *mt.šmm*	the *ridn* of the man of heaven.
	ks.qdš (14) *ltphnh*[227]*.aṯt.*	A holy cup that no woman may see,
	krpn (15) *lt'n.aṯrt*	a goblet that Asherah may not see.

The greatest irony of this text is that it contains a practically intact passage. Only two cuneiform characters are slightly damaged, the rest are in perfect shape with easily read letters. It should be simple to translate them, but several of the word-units can be split in different ways, and even more words can be translated in a number of ways, and still give us an understandable text. In short, this is a text where translation almost exclusively depends on the subjective choices and interpretations made by the translator, since the text itself has no internal indications of which translation is the best.

If we start by looking at the words that can be split in different ways, the first one to greet us is *bkrb* at the beginning of l. 12. It can be read as above: *bk rb*, 'a great beaker'. One could also read *b+krb*, and translate √*krb* as proposed by *UT*: 'to conscrate, bring an offering', in which case one might have the explanation as to why 'he gives (him)' a cup, namely to consecrate it. One could even read *bkr* and understand the last *b* as the result of an unfortunately placed word-divider, and read the entire line: *bkr. bʿẓm*, 'the strong one's firstborn (son)'.

The next word, *ʿẓm*, can be understood either as an adjective or a substantive and may be translated as 'mighty, huge, someone strong', or even, as proposed by *BGUL*, 'a bone'. If we include the next word, *ridn*, in the discussion, then this word can be split up too. Both *CML* and *MLC* read *ri dn* and understand *ri* as 'to see' and *dn* as 'a large cask'. If this is the case, then *dn* must belong to the following line, and *ri* can then be translated in a number of ways. If the first word is split and read *bk rb*, we could translate 'a great beaker, mighty (or huge) to see'. If on the other hand we read *b krb* in conjunction with the next line, we could translate, 'mighty to see is the beaker of the man of heaven'.

Unfortunately, *šmm* too can be read in a number of ways. If we regard the last *m* as an emphatic suffix, like the Akkadian *-ma*, the word *šm* can mean 'place' or 'name', or even, according to *CARTU*,

226. *CTA*: The line could also read as suggested by Cassuto, Gaster and Ginsberg (cf. *CTA*): *bk rb ʿẓm ridn. KTU*: *bk rb*.
227. *CTA, KTU* and *UT*: *ltphnh*. Autograph: *ltp□nh*.

'a consort'. Thus we could read 'a man's consort' or even—if we want to include as many divine names as possible, 'the consort of Mot'. One could likewise read *ridn* as a PN, and translate 'the firstborn of the mighty ones, *ridn*, the man of heaven'.

Things get worse, translationwise. *qdš* can be a substantive, or an adjective, a verb or a PN or DN: 'a holy one, holy, to sanctify or consecrate, Qudšu, Qadeš'. Then there is the particle *l*. If the above chosen translation where the particle *l* is a negation is rejected, any number of possibilities open up. It could be a preposition with a temporal or locative significance, an affirmative or an interjection,[228] so while we are at it, this single particle will add significantly to the number of possible translations and interpretations.

Even if we let the *l* stand as a negation, the word *ltphnh* at the beginning of 1.14 gives plenty of opportunities: one could read a verb *ph*, in the third person feminine singular with a suffix for the third person feminine singular: 'she sees her'; or 'you (second person feminine singular) see'; or 'the two of you (second person plural) see'; 'both the women (third person feminine plural) see'; 'you (second person feminine plural) see' or 'they (third person common plural) see'. One could also divide the word *into l+tp+hnh*' and with *BGUL* translate *tp* with 'beauty' and *hnh* on par with biblical Hebrew הנה, 'see!'.

The word *lt'n* can be viewed as a G-pattern √*'n*, 'to see', or finally as an N-pattern, 'to look like or seem'. If we choose some of these many possibilities, a probable translation could read:

10.	*ytn.ks.bdh*	He takes a cup in his hand,
11.	*krpnm.bklat.ydh*	a goblet in both his hands,
12.	*b krb.*	to consecrate it.
	'zm.ri dn	Huge to see is the cask,
13.	*mt.šmm*	[like] the consort of Mot.
	ks.qdš (14) *l tp*	The cup of *qdš* is surely beautiful.
	hnh.att.krpn	See! Like a woman is the goblet,
15.	*l t'n . atrt...*	truly, she [the goblet] looks like Asherah.

One could have chosen any other possible translation of each single word, and thus have arrived at a different meaning. The above chosen translation is based on the parallels that I find interesting, particularly in ll. 13-15.

The most interesting part is that we are obviously dealing with the

228. Cf. *BGUL* § 65.21, 65.24, 66 and 68.

parallel *aṯrt // aṯt*, a DN in parallel to an 'ordinary' noun. This parallel can be explained as Margalit suggests: Asherah means 'a wife', a woman following in the footsteps of her husband.[229] If we, however, recall the hypothesis mentioned above in section 4.1.2.1, namely that Asherah, in the Baal-texts, is depicted as the perfect wife, then the parallel fits, even without seeking recourse to etymological explanations.[230] Another possible explanation of the fact that a DN and a noun stand in parallel could be found in the hypothesis already touched upon in section 4.1.1.3, that *aṯrt* could be a name *or* a title, and thus could function as a parallel to the generic form *ilt* or, in this case, *aṯt*.

One could also include ll. 13-14a in this version with the consort of Mot // *qdš*, a very interesting parallel, since it opens up the possibility that *qdš*, in the Baal-texts, is used not only of Asherah, consort of El, but also of the consorts of Mot and—by inference—Yam, the other gods of the male triad. If one translates *šm* as 'consort', but retains *mt* as 'man' from the first translation of this text, then *mt. šmm* could be parallel to *aṯt*, in which case Asherah becomes // with *qdš*, a well-known parallel in the Baal-texts.

All of the above is pure speculation, with nothing certain in the text itself, or in the context of the section to give any indication which of the many possibilities mentioned was the one *ilmlk* intended, if indeed, he intended any of them.

4.2. *Asherah's Role in the Cult*

From the texts discussed so far, it seems that Asherah is an important goddess, even though she is not in the foreground of the mythological stories known to us. The next step therefore is to turn to the lists of sacrifices, in order to examine—if this is at all possible—whether these reflect her status and her relationship to the rest of the pantheon in the manner we would expect.

4.2.1. *Lists of Sacrifices*[231]

If one makes a quick survey of the extant lists of sacrifices from Ugarit and relates these to the mythological and epic texts, a rather

229. Margalit 1990. See also section 7.1. on the etymology of *aṯrt*.

230. This does not necessarily preclude Margalit's interpretation: *aṯrt* could mean 'wife' or 'consort'. See section 7.1.

231. All lists of sacrifices referred to in the following, are found in Appendix 1. They are not translated, only transliterated.

large degree of discrepancy seems to occur. A god like Dagan, whose role in the longer texts must be said to be marginal, is one of the gods mentioned often in the lists, while a goddess like Anat, whose role in the texts must be called rather central, hardly ever occurs. My own focal point, Asherah, is not found as often as one would expect in the lists: after all she seems to be the first lady of the gods, and when she does finally appear the context is not always the one we would expect from the texts.

CTA 30.5 names Asherah as part of the couple *il w aṯrt*, a foreseeable connection since she is usually regarded as El's consort. They are not found at the top of the list, however, but only on the line after the gods *ṯkmn* and *šnm*, gods who make no appearance whatever in the mythological texts.

In *CTA* 34.6, Asherah is listed immediately before these two gods, and is not linked to any other god(s) by a *w*, but her name is listed immediately after that of Baal. In this list we are probably dealing with the same order as in *CTA* 35.15-16, even if the context here is rather damaged. The only legible part of *CTA* 35.40 is *aṯrt.'ṣr<m>*, probably an offering of small birds, but the context is damaged to an extent where it is impossible to determine the order of the divinities listed.

In *CTA* 36, Asherah is listed in line 6, placed between Baal and Yam, without being connected to either of them by a conjunction; but in line 8 there is *lb'l.waṯrt*. In *CTA* 37.3, only half of her name can be read, the beginning having been reconstructed, and the context is too damaged to give any information.

KTU 1.118 is not a list of sacrifices, but rather a list of gods, and here Asherah is listed in line 19, before *'nt* and *špš*, but after *pdry*, who in the texts has a far more peripheral role than Asherah; she (*pdry*) is only known there as the daughter of Baal.

In *KTU* 1.148 Asherah is again found on her own in line 7 recto, and again before *'nt* and *špš*, but one cannot ascertain who comes before her. In the same text, line 9 verso, her name should probably be reconstructed at the beginning of the line.[232]

The above is the sum total of appearances of the word *aṯrt* in the lists of sacrifices and lists of gods that I have had access to so far; this number can hardly be said to be enormous. If it is assumed that

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232. The order of appearance in this list follows that of *KTU* 1.118 sufficiently closely to make it reasonable to reconstruct her name here.

Asherah is indeed the same goddess as *ilt* and *qdš*, the number of appearances increases, but not by much.

In *CTA* 34.11 an *ilt.mgdl* and an *ilt asrm* occur. There is no indication in any text or in the context of *CTA* 34 who these ladies might be; we can only note that they were sufficiently important to merit the sacrifice of a sheep. One or both of them could be a goddess whom we know under a different name, and one of them could be Asherah, but it is impossible to determine this. In the same text, *CTA* 34.18, there might be a reference to 'the great goddesses', *<gd>lt.iltm* (or *iltt*),[233] and finally in line 19, a sacrifice is made to a *b'lt*.

In *CTA* 38.4 *ilt* is mentioned; *CTA* 45.3 lists *qdš*; *KTU* 1.81 has *ilt* in lines 5, 8 and 21, whilst *qdšt* is read in line 17. *KTU* 1.123 might read *ilt* in line 1 recto, and does list *qdš mlk* in line 3 verso. *RS* 19.59 = *PRU* V # 125, which according to Whitaker should equal *KTU* 1.94, has—in the version printed in *PRU*—a reference to *qdš* in lines 2 and 3, but *KTU* notes a lacuna here.

Finally, there is *KTU* 1.118, a list of gods. The order of appearance used in this list is the same as that used in *KTU* 1.148 and in the Akkadian list *RS* 20.24.[234] These lists might give us an idea of the rank and order of the gods of Ugarit as they were manifested in the cult, but it does not reflect the rank and order one can deduce from the mythological texts. In this list Asherah does 'lead' the great goddesses known from the texts, but she is preceded both by the goddesses of birth, *kt<r>t*, and by Baal's daughter, *pdry*. In the Akkadian list, Asherah is noted as ^{d}*aš-ra-tum*, with the same orthography as the Akkadian Asherah has in the Akkadian texts, so this might be held to support equating the Ugaritic and the Akkadian Asherah.

It has to be concluded that Asherah is not a goddess to whom one made extensive sacrifices, even if—on a highly dubious basis—all references to *ilt* and *qdš* are included. Asherah is connected to and listed with so many different gods in the lists, that it is impossible to deduce anything certain regarding her cultic connections; the only straw to grasp in this connection is the similar lists of *KTU* 1.118 and 1.148.

That these lists—primarily *CTA* 36.8 and *CTA* 34.6—should give us evidence that Asherah stopped being El's consort and transferred her allegiance to Baal, is to build too much on too little, even when

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233. It is possible to read *<gd>lt* as a heifer, this being a sacrifice to the god listed in the lacuna in the line above.

234. The comparison between these two lists is found in *TUAT*, pp. 302-305.

one includes the Boghazköy Elkunirsa fragment.[235] With reference to this problem, see the next and final section of this chapter.

4.3. *Asherah in the Pantheon of Ugarit, including her Place in the Cult and Religion*

If the texts discussed so far are summed up, it must be concluded that they do not give much information to build on. The positive knowledge gained on her is easily summed up: she is Lady Asherah of the Day (or of the Sea), the creatress of gods, and she is one of the wet-nurses (of the gods), and that is the sum total of our certain knowledge of the lady. We can—with good reason—suppose that she is also called *ilt*, goddess or Elat, and *qdš*, Qudšu, but she is not the only goddess of the Ugaritic pantheon bearing these titles. The rest are conjectures and hypotheses, some very well supported by circumstantial evidence, while others are constructions of air, lacking any but the most flimsy relationship to the texts.

There seems to be good reason to suppose that she is the consort of El (or that El is the consort of Asherah), even if none of the texts mentions this directly. She could be the mother of El, apart from or instead of being his consort; she is after all the creatress of the gods and thus in all probability the creatress of El as well.

In the mythological texts Asherah does not have particularly friendly relations with Baal and Anat. They have killed her sons, and she has no reason to expect any good from either of them. Nevertheless, it is she who arranges that El permits the building of Baal's palace, and in the lists of sacrifices she is listed in connection with either Baal or Anat, and once even as *b'l waṯrt*. Finally, it can be conjectured that she is posited as 'the ideal woman' or 'the ideal wife' in the Baal-cycle, *CTA* 4.

Unfortunately it is far easier to work 'negatively' with the material than it is to work positively, when one has the 'minimalist' approach evinced in this book. By 'working negatively' I understand the discussion and dissection of any number of 'modern myths' on the goddess Asherah, the result of which is often that the hypotheses tumble down.

As an example of the negative approach, we could take the relationships between Asherah and El, and between Asherah and Baal. As

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235. Cf. Kapelrud 1952: 77; Pope 1955: 35-42; Otten 1953a, 1953b and Hoffner 1965. A translation of the Elkunirsa fragment is found in *ANET*, 519.

mentioned above, a number of scholars seek to find evidence in the Ugaritic texts for the view that Asherah is in the process of transferring her allegiance from El to Baal. This hypothesis is mostly based on the above-mentioned lists of sacrifices, where one finds Baal in the immediate vicinity of Asherah more often than one finds El. These lists are then related to *CTA* 4.IV.27-39, to the Bible and to the mythological Elkunirsa fragment from Boghazköy. In the latter text, the storm-god gets permission from the high-god Elkunirsa (*el qwn 'rš*), to lie with Asherah, or, as it is spelled in the Hittite, *^da-še-er-du-uš*. In the Bible (so the story goes) Asherah and Baal are coupled, rather than Asherah and El. Since this is related to the fact that Anat seems to disappear in the mists of time, the case seems to be almost foolproof. If one looks slightly closer though, the hypothesis is shown to be very fragile indeed, since several objections can be put forward on almost every point.

The first objection is to the scholarly convention that one can collect together textual and other data which is both from an enormous geographical area, and thinly spread over an equally huge number of years, centuries or even millennia. This convention has been discussed in section 3.3. Apart from this fundamental objection, the texts themselves give rise to objections.

No sources preclude that El and Asherah form a couple, just as no source indicates that the two of them are 'estranged' (Pope 1955: 35-42). On the contrary, in the mythological texts from Ugarit, Asherah functions as a princess or a queen. She is *rbt*, 'the great one', or 'the Lady'. It is she whom Baal and Anat approach in order to obtain permission to build Baal a palace, and they do this in spite of the apparently hostile relationship they have to her. Asherah is the one El asks to name a successor to Baal, upon his (Baal's) death. That this successor cannot fill the position is a different matter.

There seems to be no indifference in the relationship between El and Asherah when she approaches him on the subject of Baal's Palace. He welcomes her, offers her drink and food, and even suggests that they could retire to the adjacent chamber should she be thus disposed. That she declines his kind offer, or that we hear nothing of any bed-sport between the two of them, is not necessarily an indication that they have stopped having or have never had any sexual relations.

Likewise, no indication is given that El is older than Asherah, rather the opposite. If she is indeed his mother she must be older than

he is. It must be a bow to Western convention, that is, that a husband 'should' be older than his wife, that makes Pope and van Selms assume that El is an ageing god with a younger wife, and even if one accepts their hypothesis, that El is impotent, this fact alone hardly tells anything of a man's or a god's age.[236] That Asherah is *the* great lady of the Ugaritic pantheon in the mythological texts is, among other indications, shown by the fact that she is conveyed from one place to the other, rather than moving under her own steam. She rides on an ass, whose harness is decorated with gold and silver. She obviously has her own residence, and it is sufficiently spacious to house not only herself and her staff, but Baal's daughters as well. At least one of her servants, *qdš wamrr*, is a divinity in his (their) own right, and sufficiently important to merit sacrifice.[237]

The biblical texts will be discussed at length in Chapter 6, suffice it to say here that the claim that Asherah is 'often' coupled with Baal in the Old Testament seems to be rather optimistic, as Asherah is mentioned on forty occasions, but it is only on six of these occasions that Baal is mentioned as well. Four of these six references to Asherah and Baal also contain a mention of 'the heavenly host', without any scholars feeling an obligation to make them into close relations or spouses of either Baal or Asherah.[238]

If we then turn to the Boghazköy fragment to find some confirmation of the hypothesis that Asherah transfers her allegiance from El to Baal, an interesting set of data meets us. The proof that the storm-god 'takes over' Asherah is built on this fragment where (1) we only have Baal's word for the fact that Asherah tries to seduce him, her reaction being lost in a lacuna; (2) the storm-god humiliates Asherah by telling her he has killed her sons; and (3) the entire story ends with El and Asherah 'back together', at least in the version we have.

So, in reality, this fragment could just as well tell the story of a social climber (Baal), who tries to get between the ruling couple, and thus take over the ruling power. He does so partly by getting rid of the competition—by killing the 77 (or 88) sons of Asherah—and partly by trying to get between the partners.[239]

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236. Pope 1955: 42; van Selms according to Pope.
237. *Qdš wamrr* is mentioned in *KTU* 1.123, 1. 9 verso.
238. *Sic.* Kapelrud 1963: 63ff. For further references on this thesis, see Olyan 1988: 6 n. 16.
239. I am only outlining this very loosely as one (of an unknown number of)

As a parting shot in what is hopefully the burial of this hypothesis, one could note that it does not take the Akkadian Asherah into consideration, something that should be done if one works with a chronological and geographical frame as wide as this hypothesis does. If one looks at the Akkadian Asherah, the change of partners dissolves into thin air, since her consort is Amurru, who is also called Adad, *ša abube*, 'he of the storm (flood)'. One only has to recall that Baal in Ugarit is also called Hadad for the change of partners to disappear into thin air: even Asherah can hardly have her husband and change him too. We have to rest content, that Asherah is connected closely to El in the Ugaritic texts and to Amurru/Adad in the contemporaneous Akkadian material.

As can be seen, even hypotheses that seem reasonable can be dissected and thus turn out to be far-fetched when one relates them to the original texts and sources, and to their own context. That so many improbable hypotheses can be put forward and gain a following must be based on the (at times) very fragmentary condition of the original tablets, plus the fact that any number of tablets and fragments are lost to us or simply not yet discovered.

possibilities; someone able to read Hittite—which I am not—could probably give a far better interpretation of the fragment.

Chapter 5

ASHERAH IN ISRAEL*

In recent years, several epigraphic findings have surfaced in modern Israel, some with reference to Asherah. These findings are mainly the inscriptions on two large pithoi found in Kuntillet Ajrud, and a tomb-inscription from Khirbet el-Qom. In the following these inscriptions will be discussed.

5.1. *The Inscription from Khirbet el-Qom*[1]

In the autumn of 1967, William Dever conducted a rescue-excavation just outside Khirbet el-Qom, a small village situated between Lachisch, Tell Beit Mirsim and Hebron (Dever 1969–70: 146-49). This excavation was necessitated by the discovery of several items in an antique shop in Jerusalem that were clearly all from the same location. They turned out to be from a small burial ground that came to the light during Dever's excavation. Two grave-complexes were found, with various minor items, and three inscriptions.

The inscription that is of interest in this work is the one Dever calls Inscription 3, and it was found on a pillar between chambers 1 and 2 in grave 2. Apart from the inscription and some graffiti, all that was found were some few potsherds, all dated by Dever to the eighth to the seventh century BCE.[2]

The inscription in itself is in rather bad shape. It consists of four lines on the top of the stone, and two very fragmentary ones on the

* For a shorter version of this chapter, see Binger 1995, which presents most of the discussions and results put forward here.
1. This section is based on the following articles: Dever 1969–70; Lemaire 1977, 1984b; Naveh 1979; Miller 1980; Mittmann 1981; Zevit 1984; Hadley 1987a; Raurell 1987; Margalit 1989; Shea 1990.
2. See the map Dever 1969–70: 141. All further information on the excavation is from Dever 1969–70.

bottom; the lower two lines will not be discussed in the following.[3]

One gets the feeling that the person cutting the inscription could hardly have been a skilled stonemason. The stone itself seems to be second rate, with lots of inherent cracks, and several of the letters themselves look as someone has attempted to overwrite them in an effort to make the text more legible, apparently without success.[4]

The greatest problems are found in line 3, which looks most of all like doodles made by an illiterate trying to imitate letters.[5] It is, however, possible to extract several letters from the doodles, and the immediately readable characters are:

1. *'ryhwh?šrktbh*
2. *?rk?ryhw?y?wh*
3. *w???ryhl?šrt???š'lh*
4. *l??yhw*[6]

As this is hardly sufficient material on which to base a translation and interpretation, I have chosen—and 'choose' seems to be the operative word in this connection—the following reading and translation:

1. *'ryhw*[7] *h'šr*[8] *ktbh*
2. *brk*[9] *'ryhw lyhwh*[10]
3. *wh'wryh*[11] *l'šrt*[12] *(w)hwš 'lh*[13]

4.   *lrpyh w*[14]

1.   Uryahu <qualification of Uryahu> his writing (or: inscription)
2.   Blessed be Uryahu by Yahweh,[15]
3.   his light[16] by Asherah, she who holds her hand over him
4.   by his *rpy*,[17] who...

Line 1. The single letter that is most discussed in line 1 is the seventh
and its reading is indeed problematical. The letter can be read as *r, q,*
'or *d*. The *ayin* is the most popular choice, but hardly the right one, as
the text has a beautifully shaped *ayin* in line 3, totally lacking the
sharp edges that this letter shows. Since it has not been possible for me
to see the stone itself, I am unable to discuss whether the sharp edges
are due to irregularities in the stone, and for the same reason, I will
refrain from any definite opinion on the correct reading of this letter.

This difficulty aside, it is clear that the many scholars who have
worked with this text seem to agree more or less on the first two lines.
All read a name, '*ryhw*, and most scholars interpret the next word as
a qualification of Uryahu (his profession or position), and then *ktbh*.
The differences of opinion—what profession or position Uryahu
actually held—are mainly due to the reading of the second word. Only
three scholars have quite a different interpretation, namely Dever
(1969–70), who reads a warning, 'Be careful of his inscription';
Raurell (1987), who, building on Dever, reads: 'Ves amb compte amb

Hadley 1987a; Raurell 1987; Margalit 1989; Shea 1990. *nṣry*: Naveh 1979. *wmmṣr*:
Mittmann 1981.

12. *yd l'šr*: Dever 1969–70. *l'šrth*: Lemaire 1977; Miller 1980; Zevit 1984;
Hadley 1987a; Raurell 1987; Shea 1990. *wl'šrth*: Naveh 1979. *ydh l'l šrth*: Mittmann
1981. (...): Margalit 1989.

13. *thhwš 'lh*: Dever 1969–70. *hwš 'lh*: Lemaire 1977; Raurell 1987. *hwš' lh*:
Naveh 1979; Miller 1980; Mittmann 1981; Zevit 1984; Margalit 1989. *hwš'lh*:
Hadley 1987a. *wš'lh*: Shea 1990.

14. *l'nyhw*: Dever 1969–70; Lemaire 1977; Miller 1980; Mittmann 1981; Hadley
1984a; Raurell 1987; Margalit 1989; Shea 1990. *l'ryhw*: Naveh 1979. *l>'byhw*: Zevit
1984.

15. One could also read 'Uryahu, the blessed...', or, as an imperative, 'bless
Uryahu...'

16. Or, 'who gives light/shines for him'. The initial is understood as the initial
word in a relative clause, functioning in apposition to *yhwh*; cf. Pedersen 1985:
§§128 and 129r.

17. The last two lines could also be read: 'And his Asherah shone for him, and
his *rpy* held him in (his) hand'.

la seva inscrició'; ('Be careful of his inscription) and Shea (1990), who reads, 'Uriyahu was the one who wrote it'.

Most of the remaining scholars read the second word as *h'šr*, in the sense 'the rich or wealthy man'.[18] Naveh and Mittmann read *sin* rather than *shin* and translate accordingly: 'the governor' (Naveh 1979) and 'the singer' (Mittman 1981). Finally one could understand the second word as a different kind of qualification, namely as a geographical denomination: 'Uryahu, the man from...'[19] I have no suggestions as to where Uryahu's original home could have been, but only note the possibility of this being what we are dealing with.

Line 2. There seems to be a general consensus on reading Uryahu's name, and that he is or is to be blessed, *brk*, by or from *yhwh*. The differences in opinion concerning the interpretation of this line pertain to which conjugation of the root *brk* we are dealing with: whether Uryahu is blessed or whether the text contains a pious wish that he should be blessed.

As something resembling a curiosity, Margalit here throws in an interpretation that demands the insertion of an extra line between lines 2 and 3. This line is reconstructed partly from the book of Psalms in the Old Testament, partly from what he sees as superfluous letters in line 3. As this reconstruction resembles fantasy rather than scholarship, I refer to the article itself (Margalit 1989).

Line 3. The most interesting line is the third. It is also the most difficult to read and is the line that has occasioned the most heated disputes. As mentioned above, the letters are badly written, or overwritten several times, and the beginning of the line looks like doodles.[20] Disregarding the reasons for this state of affairs, the possibilities regarding the reading and interpretation of the line are, at the very least, as many as the number of scholars working on the text. The readings discussed in the following are:[21]

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18. So Lemaire 1977; Miller 1980; Lemaire 1984b; Zevit 1984; Hadley 1987a and Margalit 1989.

19. The parallel that leaps at one is—of course—אוריה החתי (2 Sam. 11.3-24).

20. According to the autograph in Zevit 1984.

21. (1) Dever 1969–70; (2) Lemaire 1977; (3) Naveh 1979; (4) Miller 1980; (5) Mittmann 1981; (6) Zevit 1984; (7) Lemaire 1984b; (8) Hadley 1987a; (9) Raurell 1987; (10) Margalit 1989; (11) Shea 1990.

(1)   And cursed shall be the hand of whoever [defaces it]!
(2)   et <par son ashérah,> de ses ennemis [par son ashérah], il l'a sauvé.
(3)   my guardian and by his Asherah. Save him,
(4)   Yea, from his adversaries by his asherah he has saved him.
(5)   und aus Bedrängnis heraus preist er den Gott seines Dienstes, der ihm hilft.
(6)   And from his enemies, O Asherata, save him.
(7)   and by his asherah; from his enemies he saved him!
(8)   For from his enemies by his [YHWH's] asherah he [YHWH] has saved him.
(9)   i [per la seva asherah] dels seus enemics /per la seva asherah/ l'ha salvat
(10)   And from his foes [...] he saved him.
(11)   And his Egyptian [servant] by his asherah, and here is his handprint:

Disregarding Dever 1969–70 and Shea 1990, the consensus is that Yahweh has saved, or is being beseeched to save Uryahu, and most scholars find that it is his enemies he has been, or should be, saved from. The greatest discussion, however, is on how to interpret *'šrth*: is it 'asherah' or 'Asherah', and is the word placed correctly on the line?

If one takes Zevit's autograph as one's starting-point in order to obtain a uniform valuation of the readings (and for the following discussion, uniformity in point of departure is necessary), some of the interpretations turn out to be highly improbable, since they necessitate reading several letters as if they have been written on top of each other. Alternatively, disregarding the problematical condition of the stone, one is required to assume that letters that elsewhere are evenly distributed over the other lines suddenly become very unevenly distributed in this particular line. The three least probable readings are: Dever 1969–70, with a very uneven distribution of the letters, including large holes; Mittmann 1981, who reads several letters as written within each other—the result is that several words are supposed to have been written on top of each other; Margalit 1989, who simply omits the middle part of the line, but creates a new one between lines 2 and 3.

The majority of the remaining scholars, who read *'šrth hw...*, have to read the two *he*'s and the *waw* as if they were standing on top of each other.

My transcription has two advantages over those of most of the above-mentioned scholars. I do *not* assume that any of the letters cover each other, partly or wholly,[22] and I do assume that the letters are distributed fairly evenly on the lines, with a slight 'squeezing' together of the letters at the end of lines, a well-known phenomenon when one

22. With a possible exception of the (*w*) before *hwšlh*.

writes by hand, without wanting to split words. That the stonemason was relatively unskilled is evident from the overall look of the stone, which also makes it probable that he was unable to estimate correctly how much space the individual letters took up.

As will be apparent, I have chosen a reading of this line, and of line 4, that differs from the consensus on a number of points. My reasons for the choices made are elaborated below.

wh'wryh: this rhymes both visually and orally with Uryahu and Yahweh. The word is understood as a *qal* participle of *'wr*, 'to shine, give light', with the article and a suffix for the third person masculine singular. It is, however, also possible to read the word as a *hiphil*, 'X who causes there to be light for him', or as a reference to *'šrth*. If the latter is the case, the final *he* should be read as a defective writing of the feminine ending plus a suffix.[23]

l'šrt : see below section 5.3, the discussion on who or what *'šrt* is in the texts from Israel. Here it should only be mentioned that unless one wants to read several letters on top of each other, thus mingling this word with the next, it is highly improbable that the word has a final *he*.

(w)hwš'lh: The initial *waw* is found on the stone, but it halfway covers the following *he*. I have included it in parentheses, since reading it and the two other copula creates a beautiful frame for the three divine operators in this text.[24] If one includes this *waw*, all three are connected to an apposition that defines their relation to Uryahu by a *waw* (cf. Pedersen 1985: §§128 and 129r). If one does read the second letter as a *waw*, this word could be derived from the root *š'l*, and thus be a *hophal* or *pual* perfect third person feminine singular, with a suffix for third person masculine singular and *waw* as *mater lectionis* for either a *holem* or a *qibbuṣ* in *scriptio plena*.

If, however, one should choose to disregard the *waw*, a necessity if one wants to read a final *he* in the preceding word or even an initial *he* in this word,[25] we could be dealing with a *qal* or *piel* perfect third person feminine singular, a *qal* or *piel* imperative or a *qal* participle.

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23. Defective writing of two identical consonants is known from two amulets from the seventh or sixth century from Jerusalem. The text is very similar to the priestly blessing, but has *ybrk*, and not *ybrkk* as in *BHS*. Cf. Yardeni 1991.

24. If one insists on reading *'šrth* as the preceding word, the *w* is impossible to place, as it is written before the two *hes* on the stone.

25. The *waw* is partly written on top of the preceding *he*.

No matter which of the above possibilities one chooses, the final *he* may be read as either a feminine ending or as a suffix for the third person masculine singular Finally one could, as was the case with *h'wryh*, understand both possibilities as the result of defective writing.

The root *š'l* has the basic meaning 'a handful', or the open hand including what can be held in it. If this is a regular verb in *qal, piel, pual* or *hophal*, the following interpretations are possible:

> *Qal*: to hold someone or something in one's hand, that is, to protect.
>
> *Piel*: should be understood as intensive or iterative of *qal*; to repeatedly or continuously hold something or someone in one's hand; to repeatedly or continuously protect someone or something.
>
> *Pual*: to be held in someone's hand repeatedly or continuously, to be protected more or less constantly by someone.
>
> *Hophal*: to be in someone's hand, to be caused to be protected by someone or to be caused to protect someone.

If this is the passive voice of a denominative verb, the meaning of this verb must be more or less as described above.

No matter which of the above possibilities one chooses, this must be a qualification of *'šrt*. She is the person who protects Uryahu. This reading could then explain the open hand that is depicted on the stone. It has previously been understood as a symbol for Asherah, or as an apotropaic symbol.[26] It seems easy to combine the two, and surmise that the hand is a symbol of Asherah in her role as a protective goddess.

Line 4. In line 4, most scholars read *'nyhw*, with or without the preposition *l*, as the first grapheme of this line. The exceptions are Zevit (1984), who reads *<l>'byhw* and Naveh (1979), who reads *l'ryhw*. There is, in any case, consensus on its being a name, probably that of the man who inscribed the stone or of the man who commissioned it.

According to Zevit's autograph, the *lamedh* at the beginning of the line is very clear, and there is no reason to mark it as dubious. The next letter is less clear: it could be an *aleph* as the consensus reads it, but it could equally well be read as a *resh*. The third letter can be read as a *nun* or a *beth*, as is done by most scholars, but it could also be a *pe*. The fourth letter is a relatively clear *yodh*, and at the end a *he* can

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26. Cf. Schroer 1983. On the basis of iconographic material she concludes that the hand has an apotropaic function, protecting the grave against robbers.

be read. These letters together could form the combination *lrpyh*. Now, *rpyh* is known as a name in the Old Testament,[27] but since this is a tomb inscription, this might not be a living person but rather one of the *rephaim*, *rph/rp'*, a well-known designation for the spirits of the dead that was used not only in the Old Testament and in Ugarit, but in the entire Syro-Palestinian area.[28] To read a reference to the *rephaim* would therefore be in accordance with the purpose of the stone, and place it within a tradition of tomb inscriptions found in the entire Syro-Palestinian area.

After this last legible word on the upper part of the stone, there might be one or more letters left. On the autograph it looks as if the stone has several lines at this place, and there may once have been some qualification of the *rephaim*, beginning with the same *waw* as can be read in front of the qualifications following Yahweh and Asherah.[29] If there is a reference to *rpy* in this fourth line, it is very tempting indeed to read the second word of the first line in the same way that Dever does in the *editio princeps* (Dever 1969–70), or even to retain his entire reading, only correcting line 4, so that lines 3-4 would read: 'And cursed by his *rpy*, shall be the hand of whoever <defaces it>'. This would constitute a more or less standard reading on a tomb inscription, but, as already mentioned above, Dever's reading of the stone is in general one of the less probable.

5.2. *The Kuntillet Ajrud Inscriptions*[30]

The Kuntillet Ajrud finds, first published by Meshel and Myers in 1976 and Meshel 1978, are, with respect to Asherah, at least as interesting

27. 1 Chron. 3.21; 4.42; 7.2; 8.37; 9.43 and Neh. 3.9 (cf. Lisowsky).

28. For instance, the Tabnit-inscription from Sidon, *KAI* 13, where potential grave-robbers are threatened that they will find no place of rest among the *rp'm* if they molest the grave in question.

29. The lines to the left of and across the legible text can hardly be interpreted as a symbolic tree, an ashera, as was suggested by Margalit 1989.

30. The following is based on Meshel and Meyers 1976, 1978, 1979, 1987 (also Otzen and Hadley); Naveh 1979; Stolz 1980; Garbini 1981; Angerstorfer 1982; Catastini 1982; Chase 1982; Dever 1982, 1984; Emerton 1982; Lemaire 1984a, 1984b; Weinfeld 1984; Hadley 1987b; Raurell 1987; North 1989; Otzen 1989; Margalit 1990. For a complete discussion of the texts and inscriptions from the site, not discussed here, see Otzen 1989. All texts deriving from Kuntillet Ajrud that are known to me are presented in Appendix 2.

as the Khirbet el-Qom stone. The site is situated approximately 50 km south of Kadesh Barnea close to the trade-routes going from the bay of Aqabah to Gaza. The first survey was conducted in 1969-70 as part of a larger survey, whose purpose was to determine where the border between Judah and Egypt lay in pre-exilic times.[31] In 1975–76 a building was excavated. Meshel, and several others with him, calls the place a sanctuary.

The most interesting finds in this context are the inscriptions found on two pithoi. As no official *editio princeps* exists, the following is based on the opinions voiced and readings proposed by the scholars mentioned in the first note of this section, and, in contradistinction to my study of the Khirbet el-Qom stone and the Ugaritic texts, there will be no discussion of the reading of the text. The important inscriptions from the two pithoi are here called inscriptions I and II to facilitate the ensuing discussion. This is not the official numbering, since no official presentation exists. Apart from these two, one more text from the same find may contain a reference to Asherah, which is here called inscription III.

5.2.1. *Inscriptions I and II*

Inscription I

  'mr.'...h..k[32]*.'mr.lyhl...*[33]*.-*
  wlyw'šh.w...[34]*brkt.'tkm*[35]*.lyhwh.šmrn.wl'šrth*[36]

  '...h... says: say to *yhl* and to *yw'šh* and <to NN>:
  I bless you by the Yahweh of Samaria and by his Asherah.

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31. The choice of terminology derives from Meshel and Meyers 1976, and is not the vocabulary the present author would have chosen.

32. Meshel 1987 (also Hadley 1987b and Otzen 1989) reads *'šyw hmlk*, 'Asyaw, the king', and interprets the name as an alternative name for 'Joash'. This reconstruction of name and title is then used to date the inscription to the period 836-797 BCE, when king Joas ruled in Judah.

33. Hadley 1987b. reconstructs *lyhl<l'l>*, '[say] to Yehal<lel'el'.

34. Meshel 1987 reads *wl...*; Naveh 1979; Dever 1982, 1984 and Raurell 1987 read *w<l...>*, 'and <to NN>'.

35. North 1989 reads *<brkt.'tkm>*.

36. Margalit 1990 reads *wl'šrt*.

Inscription II

'mr.[37] 'mryw.'mr.l'dny.[38] h....[39] brktk.lyhwh.[40]
tmn.[41] wl'šrth.ybrk.wyšmrk.wyhy.'m. 'dny.[42]

'mryw says: say to my lord...[43] I bless you by the Yahweh of Teman, and
by his Asherah, may he bless you and keep you and be with [you], my lord.

Apart from reconstructions of names and single letters there seems to
be general agreement on what the contents of these inscriptions are.
The only major departure in the reading of inscription I is repre-
sented by Margalit (1990), who reads *'šrt* without a suffix. The discus-
sion is centered on the interpretation of *yhwh šmrn* and 'his' Asherah,
a discussion I shall return to in section 5.3.

The disagreements as to the reading of inscription II have been
registered by Chase (1982), Hadley (1987b) and Otzen (1989), who
read *hšlm 't* where everyone else has a lacuna, and Raurell (1987),
who reads *lyhw* and not *lyhwh*, which is the general consensus. Fi-
nally, there seems to be some disagreement as to whether one should
read *tmn* or reconstruct *šmrn*.

Apart from these differences in what one reads, the discussions are
centered on whether one is to understand *wšmrn* as 'Samaria' or as
'our guardian', and whether one ought to read 'asherah' or 'Asherah'.
With regard to *yhwh šmrn*, there seems to be fairly good circum-
stantial evidence that this refers to Samaria, since inscriptions II and
III probably have references to 'the Yahweh from Teman' or 'Teman's
Yahweh'.[44] That two other inscriptions mention Yahweh in close
connection with a geographical location, makes it likely that the same
is the case in inscription I.

37. *'mr* is read by Naveh 1979; Dever 1984; Weinfeld 1984; Hadley 1987b;
Raurell 1987; and Otzen 1989; it is reconstructed by Chase 1982.

38. Chase 1982 reads *'dn<y>*.

39. Chase 1982; Hadley 1987b. and Otzen 1989 read *hšlm 't*.

40. Chase 1982 reads *l<y>hwh*; Raurell 1987 reads *lywh*.

41. Lemaire 1984b; Weinfeld 1984; Hadley 1987b; Otzen 1989; and Margalit
1990, read *tmn*; Naveh 1979; Dever 1984 and Raurell 1987 read *<šmrn>*.

42. Chase 1982 and Margalit 1990 read *'d<n>y...*; Hadley 1987b reads
'd<n>y...k.

43. Or, if one does not read the first *'mr* but does read *<hšlm't>*: '*'mryw* says: to
my Lord, <peace be with you>'.

44. Regarding the final *he* in *'šrth*, see below, section 5.3.1, where the problems
concerning suffixed personal names and names in construct relations are discussed.

5.2.2. *Inscription III*[45]

This inscription is far more problematical than the two discussed above. It is written on wall-plaster and thus was found in small pieces like parts of a giant jigsaw puzzle with an unknown number of pieces. This fact may serve to explain the total lack of agreement among scholars concerning what the text says. The only consensus is on the reading of the first line:

1. ...*brk.ymm.wys'bw*... '...blessed be their day ...'[46]

The next line, that is, the line that Meshel, Garbini and Angerstorfer call line 2, but which Otzen calls line 5, reads:[47]

   ...*hyṭb.yhwh*   '...Yahweh has done well...'[48]

These two lines are the only ones Meshel (1978, 1979) notes, but Garbini (1981) and Otzen (1989) have respectively two and three additional lines. Garbini has the following line as number 3, but Otzen calls it line 2. They read:

Garbini	...*ytnw.l*...	'...he has given to...'
Otzen	..*<n>tnw.l<y>hwh tymn*	'they have <gi>ven to YHW (*sic*) from Teman'.

It is in the remaining lines—Otzen's lines 3 and 5 and Garbini's line 4—that the reference to Asherah is found:

Otzen	3.*wl...'šrt<h>*...	'and to...h<is> Asherah...'
	5.*w'šrth*...	'and his Asherah...'
Garbini	4...*'šrt*...	'...Asherah...'

As can be seen from the above, this text is, to put it mildly, rather difficult to work with, in particular when one does not have access to any kind of official transcription or *editio princeps*. There is a reasonable probability that the text does refer to Asherah, but it is, on the

45. The discussion in this section is built on Meshel 1978, 1979; Garbini 1981; Angerstorfer 1982 and Otzen 1989.

46. However Garbini (1981) reads *y<brk*. The line can be translated 'blessed be the days where (and) they were sated' or 'where (and) they shall swear'.

47. Meshel 1987 seems to build on a far longer version of the text than the one published in 1978 and 1979.

48. This is one of two lines where Otzen 1989 reads a reference to Teman as he reads *yhwh hty<mn>*, he does, however, note that *ht* is dubious.

basis of the above, impossible to find out whether the text reads *'šrt* or *'šrth*, or, indeed, exactly what it is that *'šrt(h)* is doing.

5.3. *Who or What Was 'šrt?*

In the light of the above, it seems safe to conclude without any shadow of doubt, that Yahweh in eighth and seventh century Israel had a direct relation to *'šrt*; the only remaining problem then is, who—or what—was *'šrt*?

The main positions in the discussion are that we are dealing with a goddess by name Asherah, or that we are dealing with a cult object that was used in the Yahweh cult, and that the Old Testament terms impure. In the following, the linguistic difficulties concerning the interpretation of *'šrt* as a goddess will be discussed, and some of the problems concerning the interpretation of *'šrt* as an object will be touched upon; the latter discussion will be resumed in the next chapter, so the discussion will only be sketched here.

5.3.1. *The Final -h, Suffix or...*

The recurrent objection to seeing Asherah in the Israelite inscriptions as a goddess is the observation that in classical Hebrew personal names do not take a possessive suffix. Since *'šrth* undoubtedly contains a suffix, the discussion centers on the question of what *'šrt* is, not who, the main trend being that we are dealing with 'Yahweh and his (cult) symbol'. The problem of suffixed personal names is real enough, but in the following a number of possible solutions will be proposed.

The easiest way out, if one wants to understand *'šrth* as a goddess, is to claim that the final *he* is part of the name and not a suffix at all. This presupposes that we are dealing with a final vowel *a* written in *scriptio plena*, and that the name is accordingly to be read 'Aširta(h)' rather than 'Ašerah' (cf. Angerstorfer 1982). This possibility is supported by the Amarna letters, where a king, 'Abdi-Aširta' or 'Abdi-Ašrati', is mentioned. It is, of course, possible that the name should be read Aširta(h), but the evidence in favor of this is chronologically so far removed from the relevant Israelite inscriptions that this hardly seems feasible. The other 'easy' solution would be to claim that the final *he* is an additional feminine ending that has been added to the name to ensure that no one mistakes Asherah's gender, or the fact that this is a goddess (cf. Zevit 1984).

A third possibility is to claim that Asherah can take a suffix since it is not originally a name, but rather a title.[49] The proof that it was a title could then be that it takes a suffix. The argument is circular, but it is there, particularly if one builds on more material than that discussed in this section.

Another possibility is to claim that, even though one cannot attach suffixes to personal names, we are here dealing with an example of this phenomenon anyway.[50] It is well worth remembering in this connection, that any grammar of any living language is a rationalization after the fact. No languages (apart from artificial, created languages like Esperanto) start their lives with a grammar. Languages develop continuously, and one will invariably be able to find at any given time features of a living language that the existing grammar is unable to explain. The grammar always adapts to the living language, not the other way round.

The Hebrew spoken and written in the eighth and seventh century BCE was a living language, and if we come upon any linguistic phenomena that are unknown to us from the existing grammar, it seems somewhat shoddy to claim that we, several thousands of years later, are better able to write the language than the people who actually spoke it. It might be more correct to modify our grammatical insights in order to make them agree with the new insights into the language gained through access to 'new' texts.

In this concrete case, the suffixed personal or divine name, there are several pieces of circumstantial evidence that might be useful. Classical Hebrew grammar excludes the possibility of suffixing or determining a proper name, just as it excludes the possibility of having a proper name in a construct relation. Nevertheless, names are found as parts of construct relations.[51] Furthermore, if one accepts the Ugaritic texts as relevant evidence in connection with Israelite or Old Testament texts, one notes that the name of the goddess Anat occurs with a possessive suffix for the third person masculine singular.[52] Likewise, one might recall Wellhausen's reconstruction of Hos. 14.9, in which connection he, disregarding the grammatical objections, reads: *'ny 'ntw*

49. Cf. for instance sections 4.1.1.3 and 4.1.2.4 above. See also section 7.2.
50. Cf. for instance Freedman 1987.
51. Cf. Pedersen 1985: §118g. See also Emerton 1982, who uses the Kuntillet Ajrud inscriptions as basis for a discussion of this.
52. *KTU* 1.43.13, *l'nth*, 'to his Anat'.

w'šrtw, 'I am his Anat and his Asherah' (cf. Weinfeld 1984: 122).

Thus there is plenty of circumstantial evidence in favor of not being too rigidly adherent to classical Hebrew grammar. Even the most rigid rules have exceptions, and it can thus be assumed that since we are dealing with several inscriptions, all referring to *'šrth*, we are indeed dealing with a suffixed name in the inscriptions discussed here. The explanation could be that this is something that might have been colloquial language, but which has turned into a religious formula, thus no longer forming a part of the colloquial language. The solution could be that in religious language it is permissible in certain circumstances to add suffixes to proper names, even if one cannot or does not, as a rule, do so in ordinary conditions. As a final indication that this is what we are dealing with, one might mention that several scholars have claimed that, the final *he* in the tetragrammaton was probably a suffix and did not become part of Yahweh's name until a fairly late date.[53] If this is the case, the Kuntillet Ajrud findings themselves give interesting additional information.

In my opinion, it is highly significant that we are dealing with the form *yhwh* in the three inscriptions that connect Yahweh to a geographical location, whereas the remaining inscriptions from Kuntillet Ajrud that mention Yahweh without the geographical connection use the form *yhw*. The only exception is inscription III, which does use the form *yhwh* without any geographical name; the text is, however, sufficiently fragmentary to allow one to speculate on the existence of a—now lost—geographical denomination;[54] or one could choose to follow Otzen who reads a reference to Teman in the relevant line.[55] If Otzen is right in his reading of inscription III then the trend in the texts is consistent, and there is a very strong indication that the final *he* in the tetragrammaton originates with various 'local' Yahwehs, and thus functions as a suffix, thus 'proving' that divine names (if not personal names as well) could be and were suffixed.[56]

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53. So Mettinger 1982: 127. As a example he mentions the Mesha stela, ll. 17-18. See also Emerton 1982, for a resumé of the discussion.

54. This argument *ex silentio* is naturally worthless in itself, and is only mentioned out of sheer perversity.

55. Otzen 1989, who reads *l<y>hwh tymn* in what he calls l. 2, and *yhwh hty<mn>* in what he calls l. 5.

56. I am fully aware that this argumentation looks like a circular argument, and so it is.

If the last letter of both names, *yhwh* and *'šrth,* is a possessive suffix, the reference could be to 'his Yahv', with the 'his' referring to the man for whom the inscription was written, and in 'his Asherah', the 'his' referring either to the same man or to Yahweh. But this is not the only possibility. In Hebrew it is impossible to determine whether one is referring to 'his', thereby denoting a person, or 'its', thereby denoting a place. If the final *he* in the names refer to a place and not a person, we could be dealing with Teman's or Samaria's Yahweh and/ or Asherah in the inscriptions that have final *he*'s in the names and contain the name of a place. As a result of this we can assume that we are probably dealing with a *he*-locale or a locative-accusative ending, a fact which would have been self-evident to the writer and his original readers: 'the Yahweh and Asherah of this particular place'. If this is indeed a locative *he,* this gives an indication that the word *šmrn* in inscription I should be translated 'Samaria' and not 'our guardian'.

Whether we are thus dealing with a *he*-locale, or with a possessive suffix referring to a place name, these inscriptions seem to confirm that there were several Yahweh sanctuaries in Israel before the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar This fact does not, however, explain the possible final *he* in *'šrth,* nor the definite *he* in *yhwh* on the Khirbet el-Qom inscription.

5.4. *Asherah in Israel, from the Epigraphical Findings*

As argued above, nothing apart from 'old' grammatical insights into the grammar of classical Hebrew and possibly the personal piety of the individual scholar prevents one from reading the final *he* in *'šrth* as anything but a suffix, something that indubitably connects *'šrt* to Yahweh. This explanation seems to be the one that covers most of the occurrences of the final *he,* and is valid even when one understands *'šrt* as a goddess, and not an object. The only remaining question then is: who was Asherah?

That she was a goddess seems certain, and that she had her legal and official place in the Yahweh religion seems more than probable, even if the inscriptions discussed here seem to be very few indeed. Any goddess connected to a god—Baal for instance—in the way that we have seen Asherah connected to Yahweh in the above, would, without any major discussion, be seen as the relevant god's consort or wife. That we are dealing with the god who becomes the one God of the

Jewish as well as Christian religion, seems to make quite a lot of scholars unable to imagine that *'šrt* could be a goddess; personal piety has, however, no place in sound scholarly debate. Therefore it must be supposed that Asherah was indeed a goddess, and the consort of Yahweh.

Most of the attempts to explain why Asherah in these texts could not possibly be a goddess are based on the Old Testament material, and these will be discussed in section 6.4. On this basis it is claimed that Asherah is a thing, a cult-pole, a Yahweh-symbol, a sanctuary, a tree or a hypostasis (the turning of a Yahweh-symbol into a god[dess] in its own right).

It is a well-known fact that many religions use one or more symbols to denote their gods and goddesses, but I have never heard of anyone worshipping the symbol, and not the god that it symbolized. It is not the trees or rivers or stones that 'primitive' people worship; it is the spirits or gods that live in these things that are the recipients of the offerings and prayers. One does not worship St Paul's Cathedral in London, or a baptismal font; nor would one bless in the name of either cathedral or font. Therefore it seems strained, to say the least, to argue, as North does, that the Kuntillet Ajrud and Khirbet el-Qom texts refer to a thing, on the supposition that 'an ordinary worshipper, not uncouth or crassly ignorant, but just averagely theologically unsophisticated, might well have been impelled upon sighting an obelisk-like cult-stela or tree trunk [the Asherah], to formulate a pious invocation "for Yahweh (of Samaria) and his symbol"' (North 1989: 137). In this connection it is also worth noting that the texts discussed above have a surprisingly uniform wording, and to ascribe all these formula-like phrases to 'ordinary worshippers' seems to me to be stretching probability too far.

On the basis of the texts discussed in this section, we can now conclude that the cult of Asherah in 'ancient Israel' was closely connected to the cult of Yahweh, that Asherah was a goddess, and that she functioned as his consort. Further, she was part of the 'official' religion of the time.[57] She had functions of her own, apparently securing the welfare of her adherents. She was invoked in apotropaic texts, just as she was appealed to in prayer texts.

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57. Insofar as one can talk of any kind of orthodoxy or official religion in the 'Israel' of the eighth and seventh century BCE

Chapter 6

ASHERAH IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

As the point of departure for discussions of Old Testament material, I repeat the statement I made in section 3.2 that it is only relevant to include the Old Testament among the sources to Israelite religion inasmuch as the information found in the Old Testament is substantiated by extra-biblical texts and/or archaeological material. As Asherah (or even *ašerah*) is mentioned in extra-biblical sources, it is relevant to look at the mention she gets in the collection of texts known to us as the Hebrew Bible or the Old Testament.

6.1. *The Goddess*

The Old Testament uses the word אשרה forty times in nine of the books of the Old Testament.[1] Of these occurrences, we may presume that most references derive from the so-called Deuteronomists.[2] Since this group of authors and redactors are to be found relatively late, in post-exilic times,[3] and since it is known that they were advocates of an

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1. Exod. 34.13; Deut. 7.5; 12.3; 16.21; Judg. 3.7; 6.25, 26, 28, 30; 1 Kgs 14.15, 23; 15.13; 16.33; 18.19; 2 Kgs 13.6; 17.10, 16; 18.4; 21.3, 7; 23.4, 6, 7, 14, 15; Isa. 17.8; 27.9; Jer. 17.2; Mic. 5.13; 2 Chron. 14.3; 15.16, 17.6; 19.3; 24.18; 31.1; 33.3, 19; 34.3, 4, 7.

2. Cf. Olyan 1988. In order to facilitate reading, I will not in the following be discussing the 'so-called Deuteronomists' but only the Deuteronomists. The present stand of scholarship is such that practically none of the certainties of 25 years ago are certain any longer, thus the connotations carried by the word 'Deuteronomists' are such that this term as well becomes suspect. It is—like many other words in this book—used as a convenient term, and is chosen for this reason, not for its accuracy or lack of it.

3. Cf. for instance Lemche 1991, Garbini 1988. As stated in the introduction, this book was originally written in 1992. Since it has been impossible to rewrite it completely, I will in the following use a number of terms that are increasingly subject

exclusively monotheistic Yahwism, it may be assumed that they were not unbiased in their descriptions of a polytheistic Yahwism, just as it may be assumed that their knowledge of the religious practices of times past, that is, before the exile, was limited.

Not all occurrences of Asherah in the Old Testament will be discussed thoroughly. The primary focus will be passages that mention a goddess or that connect Asherah with Yahweh: that is, material that corresponds to the texts from Kuntillet Ajrud and Khirbet el-Qom.[4] Most times אשרה functions as a noun denoting an object, and is not used as a name or a title. Of these occurrences, Reed describes six as referring to a goddess (Reed 1949: 96) and these are the passages that will be discussed in what follows.

6.1.1. *1 Kings 15.13 and 2 Chronicles 15.16*
The two verses discussed in the following are, if not identical, then sufficiently parallel (at least in the Hebrew version) to allow us to assume that either one is more or less copied from the other or that they both derive from a common source.

The text of 1 Kgs 15.13 reads (following *BHS*)[5]

> And also Maakah, his mother, he removed from the *gebirah*, as she had made[6] a picture of Asherah. And Asa cut down her picture and burned [it] in the brook of Kidron.

The Septuagint version is in many ways radically different from the Hebrew. It seems as if the Greek version is translated (or written) from a completely different *Vorlage*. The verse as found in the Septuagint translates:

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to discussion, such as 'the exile' and 'ancient Israel'. This is not done uncritically, or without serious doubt about their validity, but the discussions necessary to avoid these terms, and the necessity of then finding new terms that cover the present stand of scholarship do not belong in this book. The terms are therefore used as a convenience. With regard to 'ancient Israel', see the discussion in section 2.2.

4.   A complete discussion of all occurrences of the word אשרה in the Old Testament appears in Reed 1949. See also Olyan (1988), whose discussion also includes all occurrences, but who is not as thorough as Reed.

5.   All translations are—if nothing else is noted—made by me.

6.   Or, 'she worshipped a picture of Asherah'. On the interpretation of √עשה as worshipping or celebrating a feast or a holiday, see section 6.3.2.

And he removed Ana, his mother, from power[7] just as he did with the
assemblies in her groves. And Asa cut down her 'images'[8] and burned
[them] with fire in the brook of Kidron.

If the Hebrew and Greek versions are compared, it appears that it is
some version of the Hebrew root √מעך that is translated into κατα-
δύσεις (here understood as a version of καταδύω, 'to go down, to
descend'), whereas √מעך has the basic meaning of being pressed or
squeezed (into the ground). If the word מעכה in the Hebrew text is
understood, not as a name, but rather as an ordinary feminine par-
ticiple, then the first part of the verse can be translated as 'and also his
mother was pressed away, for he removed her...' The different names
for the dowager queen in the two versions could imply a different
Vorlage, but also that some form of the root √מעך existed in the text
that the Septuagint is based on.

In the 'parallel' passage of 2 Chron. 15.16, there appears a new
variant of what is presumably the same event. The verse (following
BHS) reads:

And also Maakah, the mother of king Asa, he removed her from the
gebirah, as she had made[9] a picture of Asherah. And Asa cut down her
picture, and he crushed and burned [it] by the brook of Kidron.

The Septuagint version, on the other hand, reads:

And Maaka, his mother, he removed, so that she should not hold public
office for Astarte, and he cut the idol to pieces and burned it by the brook
of Kidron.

The differences between 1 Kings and 2 Chronicles in *BHS* are slight:
Asherah has a definite article in 1 Kings, but not in 2 Chronicles; the
opening of the two verses is different; the word-order differs in the
single parts; and the relevant representation of Asherah is not only
burned in Chronicles, but also crushed. This 'extra' verb in the He-
brew version of Chronicles is, however, missing in both the Septuagint

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7.   A more literal translation of this part of the sentence would be, 'so that she
should not be a leader (president, official)'.

8.   'Images'. The Greek word translated is καταδύσεις, regarding which LSJ
give this passage as a *hapax legomenon*, 'a thing to shudder at'. All other possible
translations in LSJ derive from the verb καταδύω, meaning 'dipping, descent, going
down; hiding-place, hole, depth'.

9.   Or cf. note 8 and section 6.3.2: 'she worshipped' or 'she celebrated' for the
picture of Asherah.

and in the Syriac and Arabic versions. Another interesting feature is that this passage is the only one in Chronicles that uses the singular of the word אשרה. All other occurrences are plural: eight are masculine plural and only two are feminine plural.

We can safely assume that the Hebrew versions are versions of the same story, or *Vorlage*. According to traditional Old Testament scholarship it is Chronicles that is more or less copied from Kings, but in the Septuagint there are two very different versions, differing not only from each other but also differing radically from their presumed Hebrew original.

As noted above, the Septuagint version of Kings has a different name for the dowager queen, whereas in Chronicles the name Maaka is retained. What is different, however, is the name of the goddess. The verse does not deal with 'an asherah' or 'Asherah', or 'the groves', but with Astarte, and in the first part of the verse, we are not dealing with a picture of the goddess, but rather with the dowager functioning as λειτουργία, that is, holding public office for Astarte. This could be the real offence of the dowager queen: that she did not stick with the official spouse of Yahweh, Asherah, but had a cult and/ or idol of Astarte.[10]

On their own these verses do not seem to tell the story of a cultic reform, but rather of a palace revolution or *coup d'état*, where the dowager queen is removed from her public functions by her son. This impression is reinforced when one reads on, for in 1 Kgs 15.14 it is stated that the high places stay in function. Asa does drive the *qedešim* out of the country, but—if we stay with the framework of the stories—they are still there some 300 years later.[11]

Disregarding the implications of palace revolution and the role and function of *gebirah*, it seems obvious that the Hebrew versions tell of a—more or less—private statue of a goddess; therefore there is no reason to translate the word אשרה as anything but a proper name, that is, Asherah. In this verse, then, the cult for Asherah is presented as being conducted by a princess of the Davidic dynasty,[12] and it is thus

10. For further discussion of this, see below section 6.4.1: excursus on the relationship between Asherah and Astarte.

11. On the *qedešim*, see below, excursus in section 6.1.4.

12. Maaka is—cf. 1 Kgs 15.10—a daughter of Absalom. She seems to be the mother of Abija as well, cf. v.2., but perhaps she is only Asa'a mother in the sense

not seen as something only 'the people' did.

6.1.2. *1 Kings 18.19*

> And now, send out, and bring all Israel to me at the mountain of Carmel;
> and the 450 prophets of Baal, and the 400 prophets of Asherah, who dine
> at the table of Jezebel.

The '400 prophets of Asherah', can hardly be anything but prophets
of a divinity, in this case a goddess. According to the apparatus of
BHS this passage is a late addition to the text. If this is the case, the
passage does not thereby lose its significance, rather the opposite.
Kings is part of the deuteronomistic history, and if the '400 prophets
of Asherah' are placed there by a late redaction, then this shows that
at the time this passage was inserted a goddess by the name of Asherah
was (still) known. It seems as if the writer (or redactor), wants to dis-
credit her, and this is done by coupling her name to Baal and to
Jezebel, the ultimate 'bad girl' of the Old Testament. If the Asherah
passage is later than the rest, it shows that the attempted cultic reform
program of the Deuteronomists had not been successful with regard to
the goddess.

A further interesting trait is the Septuagint translation of the name
Baal. Usually, the Septuagint only transcribes the name, but in this
verse it is translated into 'shame', a 'tradition' known from the
Hebrew text as well.

6.1.3. *2 Kings 21.3, 7*

> 3. And he turned, and he made the high places that his father Hezekiah
> had destroyed, and he made altars for Baal, and he made[13] an Asherah
> like Akhab the king of Israel had made, and he worshipped all the heav-
> enly host and he served them.
>
> 7. And he placed the picture of Asherah that he had made,[14] in the house
> of which Yahweh said to David and to his son Solomon: 'In this house,
> and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen from all the people of Israel, I will
> place my name in eternity'.

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that she is the lady holding the post of *gebirah*, 'dowager queen' or 'mother of the
king'.
    13. Or, cf. above notes and section 6.3.2, for an alternative meaning of √עשה:
'he worshipped' or celebrated Asherah.
    14. Or, cf. section 6.3.2, 'that he worshipped/celebrated'.

The passage of 2 Kgs 21.3-7 deal with what could be called 'the reform of Manasseh'. As was the case above, there seems little doubt that a picture of the goddess Asherah is referred to in v. 7, and that this picture is placed in the temple of Jerusalem. In v. 3, however, it is a thing that is made. This can be deduced from the context but might also be implied in the Hebrew text, since v. 3 has אשׁרה without the definite article, whereas v. 7 has the definite article attached to the word.[15]

If we try to gain an overall view of the situation in this passage, we can see that v. 3 opens with the word וישׁב, an imperative construct from the root שׁוב√. This root means 'to turn' and—more often than not—it is used of (re)turning to the correct Yahwistic cult.[16] Those who have read v. 2 and 6b know that Manasseh is not doing the right thing, but without these two passages the pericope could easily be understood as a positive evaluation of Manasseh's deeds. This could point to the fact that the Deuteronomists—at least with regard to this pericope—were working from a *Vorlage* in which Manasseh was regarded as a good king who was doing the right thing.

An interesting problem in the enumeration of the many cult practices that Manasseh is (re)introducing, is 'why are we told all this'? Most other 'bad' kings are referred to only as kings who do 'evil in the sight of the LORD' (KJV), but it seems as if it is important for us to know that it is Manasseh, and no other king, who (re)introduces the various cult practices described here, such as (re)introducing Asherah into the Yahweh temple of Jerusalem.[17]

A possible explanation could be that the Deuteronomists needed a bad guy who was close to Josiah in time. The wrong cult must be in function when Josiah ascends to the throne; if it is not, he cannot perform the scourging of the temple and countryside that he does. On the other hand, since exclusive Yahwism, with the cult centralized in Jerusalem, is one of the main issues of the Deuteronomists, they need

15. On the possible implications of the definite article (or the lack of it) with Asherah, see below, section 6.3.

16. So any number of prophets, e.g. Isa. 1.27, 10.21 etc.

17. The usual interpretation is that Asherah as well as Nehuštan are removed from the temple of Jerusalem by Manasseh's father, Hezekiah, but the passage purportedly describing this—2 Kgs 18.4—does not mention the temple: one assumes that both the ašerah and Nehuštan were placed in the temple, but the reference is not explicit. See also below, section 6.2.2.

to show that the non-Yahwist paraphernalia in the temple was not ancient, but the result of a relatively new cult practice. Thus the deuteronomists in one fell swoop acknowledge that Asherah has had her place in the temple of Yahweh, and reduce her existence there to a period of some 40 years.[18]

If we assume from the above argument that the Deuteronomists have used a Manasseh-friendly source, we see a king rectifying the wrongs done by his father. He reinstates the correct cult practices, with multiple altars and 'pictures', and puts the entire pantheon— which is the interpretation I tentatively put on 'the heavenly host' in these passages including Asherah—firmly back in the temple where they belong.[19] The deuteronomist interpretation is different from mine, but without deciding whose version is 'the right one', it can be deduced from this passage that the Deuteronomists know a goddess by the name of Asherah, and that they know her cultic representation to have been (or perhaps even, to be) present in the temple of Jerusalem.

6.1.4. *2 Kings 23.4, 7*

> 4. And the king ordered the high priest Hilkijahu and the priests of the second order and the keepers of the door to bring out from Yahweh's temple all the vessels that had been made for Baal and for Asherah and for all the host of heaven, and he burned them outside Jerusalem at the valley of Kidron, and he carried their dust to Beth-El.

> 7. And he tore down the houses of the *qedešim* that were in the house of Yahweh, where the women were weaving, where the houses of Asherah were.[20]

The verses translated above are part of the description of the reform of Josiah, and with these we have come to one of the great heroes of the Deuteronomists, King Josiah. The chapter describes a cult reform,

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18. The 40 years are the period from Manasseh's ascension to the throne until the dating of the Josianic reform in 2 Kgs 22. It is tempting to draw a parallel here to the 40 years in the wilderness during the Exodus, and to the 40 years of cultic wilderness in this period. Unfortunately this is neither the right time nor the right place to discuss the possible symbolism involved in this.

19. That Asherah belongs in the temple is on a par with what the women of Jer. 44.16-18 say: 'the goddess has always been a part of our cult, and to try to make her obsolete is not only wicked and wrong, it results in famine and war'.

20. Discussion of this translation is found below. On the *qedešim*, see excursus below.

whose aim is exclusive Yahwism conducted only in Jerusalem.

In this passage there is no positive evaluation of anything except Yahweh-only worship, conducted only in Jerusalem, every other kind of cult is condemned and terminated, including that of the priests that had hitherto thought they were conducting the correct multi-god cult.

The word אשרה is used in v. 6 as well but—as was the case with 2 Kgs 21.3—it is an object rather than a goddess (it is milled to dust, and burned) and has no definite article. The definite article is attached to both the above translated occurrences.

'Asherah' or 'asherah' is placed firmly in Jerusalem, and in the temple of Yahweh, but in v. 4 the implication seems to be the existence of a close relationship between Baal and Asherah. We are told that the king orders the priests to carry all vessels made for Baal, Asherah and the heavenly host out of the temple, but the Hebrew text explicitly writes 'the vessels made for Baal, and for Asherah and for all the heavenly host'. It plays with the connection between all kinds of idolatry, but separates idolatry into three different members.

A combination of the three is found a total of four times in the Old Testament: 2 Kgs 17.16, 23.3, 23.4 and 2 Chron. 33.3,[21] and in three other passages, Baal, Asherah and the heavenly host are presented as examples of the kind of idolatrous cult the Israelites and their kings conducted. Only in this passage is there something else connecting them: namely, they all have vessels placed in the temple of Jerusalem. This connection seems too tenuous to uphold the claim that Baal and Asherah were a couple 'in Old Testament times', just as it is not valid grounds for claiming that Asherah or Baal were closely related (as by family) to 'all the heavenly host'. The vessels are specifically those of the individual god Baal, the individual goddess Asherah and the unspecified mass of the heavenly host.

In v. 7 as well, we must be dealing with a goddess. As can be seen, I have translated this verse radically differently from the KJV, which reads,

> And he brake down the houses of the sodomites, that were by the house
> of the LORD, where the women wove hangings for the grove.

The traditional translation is based on the Masoretic pausal signs, and on a (traditional) textual note, also found in *BHS*, whereby the 'houses' of Asherah become things woven for Asherah. To make this

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21. This verse is the Chronicles version of 2 Kgs 21.3.

correction however, one creates a *hapax legomenon*, something I for one would like to avoid, unless all other possibilities have been exhausted; and there is indeed a simpler solution. By removing the pausal rebia from הנשׁים to ארגות, the sentence is restructured, and becomes a main clause followed by three relative clauses, all giving us further information on the houses of the *qedešim*: they were located in (not by) the house of Yahweh; this was where the women wove; and this was where the 'houses' of Asherah were kept. Naturally, this translation does not bring us one bit closer to what the houses of Asherah were, but we do get rid of the 'woven houses' of the Masoretic text.

If I were to forward a possible explanation on what the 'houses of Asherah' could be, my immediate association of ideas is the house-shaped incense altars found within the area defined as 'Israelite' in this book. Many of those have decorations, including various animals and humanoid figures, probably goddesses. The only problem with this association is that most of these are from the Bronze Age or early Iron Age, whereas this text can under no circumstances be earlier than sixth century, and in all probability is much later than that. Keel, however, mentions 150 incense-altars or incense-stands found in Lachish that have the same box-shape as the earlier examples.[22]

A different problem in this verse, is that of the *qedešim*. This verse is often used as 'proof' of a sexually oriented fertility-cult taking place in or at the temple in Jerusalem, and likewise taken as proof that these cult practices were part of the worship of Asherah. It thus becomes necessary to investigate whether the *qedešim* (male or female) were indeed hierodules or whether the term could cover something else.

Excursus: קדשׁה/קדשׁ: *Priest or Prostitute*[23]

Nothing in the Old Testament texts themselves suggest the translation of קדשׁה/קדשׁ as 'prostitute', just as nothing suggests that there was any kind of sacred prostitution going on in the temple of Jerusalem. One of the two places in the Hebrew text where the word קדשׁה is used as a synonym (or a euphemism) for a prostitute is the story of Judah and Tamar (Gen. 38), where the word is used as an alternative designation for

22. *ANEP*, figs. 582-86 and 590-91 shows several of these incense-altars from Megiddo, Ai and Beth-shan. Keel's mention of the Persian period altars is found in Keel 1972: 130.

23. The following is based on Brooks 1941, Gruber 1986, Toorn 1989 and Westenholz 1989.

√זנה. The other is Hos. 4.14, which uses the words in parallel.

I shall start with the Judah and Tamar story, as most scholars do, when they want to equate the *qedešim* with prostitutes. The word זנה is most often used of a whore or a prostitute, but the original meaning of the word is that 'the husband does not live in his wife's tribe' (cf. KB), that is, that the woman designated a זנה is a foreigner, seen in relation to the man and his tribe. That Tamar is a זנה in the 'original' sense seems obvious. Judah has left his own people and has married a 'Canaanite woman', and since we hear no word of Tamar's ancestry, it must be assumed that it is immaterial, that is, it is not 'Israelite'. A foreign woman is—almost by definition—a dangerous person, not to be trusted. She is a potential whore (cf. Lemche 1986: 78), just as a woman who acts on her own, a woman who does not belong to any man, is. Tamar is doubly suspicious: she is a non-Israelite, and—even if she is living in her father's house—she does not really belong to any man. She is 'between husbands' and the one man responsible for her does not take his responsibility seriously. The use of the word זנה in this passage could then very well be a play on both the 'original' meaning of the word, and on the more common use of the word. She is a foreigner, and she acts like a harlot. In the passage where the interaction between Judah and Tamar is related, the word used is זנה. It is only in vss 21-22 that the word קדשה occurs, and here it is neither Judah nor Tamar but the friend of Judah using it. Tamar's actions are not those of a well brought up young lady, but then she is in dire straits and her actions are those of a desperate woman. The story can be seen as an exemplary story interpreting Deut. 25.5-10, and thus as belonging either to a deuteronomist or post-deuteronomist layer. The use of the word קדשה here in connection with זנה could very well be polemical, on par with the use of the term in other deuteronomist-layers.

The other place paralleling קדשה and זנה is Hosea 4:14, but here the reference is specifically cultic, and is used of people who are participants in the 'wrong' or 'evil' cult: that is, the non-Yahwist or not-exclusively-Yahwist cult. From this context we are once again given reason to suspect that this is a parallel that can be used polemically, as a derogative description of the *qedešim*: they are like 'foreigners' or 'fornicators'. The זנה then could be a woman who does not keep herself to herself, be it religiously (she has close relations to other gods than Yahweh) or personally (she is married to a man from another tribe). Likewise with the קדשה: what makes a woman a whore, or—if we stay with the understanding of the Old Testament terminology outlined in section 2.3—makes her a 'Canaanite' woman, is any kind of misbehavior, sexual, social, and cultic. If this understanding is brought to bear on the Tamar and Judah story, then the understanding of the term קדשה as polemical and derogative is reinforced.

An examination of the word קדשה itself suggests the normal assumption with any word deriving from the root קדש: that we have moved into the sphere of the holy or untouchable, something or someone who is set aside, who is sanctified or holy. The obvious person to carry such a designation would then be some kind of cult-functionary, or priest or priestess, since the priest or priestess is holy through her or his close connection with the divine. If we couple this with Gruber's assumption, that the male קדש is a 'Canaanite cult-singer', and translate the term as 'cultic personnel functioning in the non-Yahwist or not-exclusively-Yahwist cult', then there is no reason

to suppose that females bearing the equivalent of that title were anything else. The only possible (though not very good) reason I can think of for assuming that male and female *qedešim* are not basically the same thing must be a personal dislike for the idea that females could function in any kind of 'Israelite' cult, be it good or evil.

An example of this distaste is found in Gruber, who assumes that the female *qedešim* were hierodules and the males cult-singers. Gruber's arguments are based on the Tamar story, but, as shown above, the term קְדֵשָׁה need not be limited to a person having sexual intercourse, and there still is no reason to believe that the designation in Genesis is used accurately: it is, if anything, used polemically.[24]

A female priest will always be suspect in a society where the male of the species has the exclusive rights of performing the rites of the dominant cult. A woman minister or priest is no better than a whore, since not only does she condemn herself, she also condemns those who follow her by accepting her office, seducing them away from salvation. This is the situation described by Hosea and very similar ones are referred to by St Paul. Even in our day and age any number of churches, groups and sects (including the Roman Catholic Church and a number of High Church Protestant groups) consider this to be the case. There is no reason to believe that the deuteronomists thought differently.

A different interpretation of the *qedešim* is found by Toorn: he considers the *qedešim* to be men and women who have taken a sacred vow. Toorn then explains the female *qedešot* as having gained their reputation because the promises given often included pecuniary obligations, and since women did not have money of their own, their only way of procuring it was by selling the only commodity they had: themselves. This interpretation is very interesting, but is—like most others—based on the premise that the deuteronomist's use of the term is accurate, rather than polemical.

Concluding this excursus, we can say that there is no reason for believing that the *qedešim* were prostitutes. They might well have been priests in the 'Canaanite' cult, that is, the non-Yahwist or not-exclusively-Yahwist cult that the Deuteronomists were opposing. Since all not-exclusively-Yahwist cult was 'Canaanite' and equalled whoring with 'foreign' gods, it is not to my mind too fanciful to imagine that 'holy prostitution' need not refer to a sexual act, but could refer to association with other gods than Yahweh.[25] If this is the case, then the prohibition in Deut. 23.18 could likewise be explained. 'Israelites' were not allowed to become *qedešim*, since *qedešim*—almost by definition—were 'Canaanites'.[26]

24. Even if I cannot accept or agree with Gruber's conclusions, his argumentation is solid enough, up to a point. Thus he writes, 'tragically scholarship suffered from scholars being unable to imagine any cultic role for women in antiquity that did not involve sexual intercourse' (Gruber 1986: 138). The tragedy is maintained on a smaller scale in Gruber's own article, where it is only in the 'Israelite' cult (or rather, the Old Testament version of 'Israelite') that women's only possible function was as hierodules.

25. The problems of apostasy and of constancy in connection with Yahweh is often couched in sexual metaphors; not only Hosea uses the picture of the harlot that he marries and divorces, but Ezekiel treats this theme as well in the well-known chs. 16 and 23.

26. Here I use the terms 'Israelite' and 'Canaanite', not as ethnic groupings, but rather as social and religious groupings; cf. section 6.2.

6.1.5. *Summing Up*

If we take an overall view of the verses discussed above, all of which contain a reference to the goddess Asherah, then they have a common trait; all except 2 Chron. 15.16 have a definite article attached to the name. If this is combined with the knowledge that בעל with no article means 'lord', while with the definite article it refers to the god Baal, then we might assume that the five different verses discussed above use the definite article in a similar, qualifying way.[27]

Since this is not a book about the development of the Old Testament, or on grammar, but rather on the use of the term אשרה in three different corpi of texts, it is impossible to discuss at any length the possible reasons behind the lack of the article in 2 Chronicles. We have to leave it with the observation that the chroniclers generally do not use this word the same way the Deuteronomists do. All other uses of the word in 2 Chronicles (which is the only one using this term) are plural, eight masculine plural and two feminine plural. This could point in the direction that the chroniclers had no reference for אשרה as anything but a part of the non-Yahwist cult.

What can be said, without discussing the problems involved in the composition and dating of the Old Testament, is that the deuteronomists seem to have known a goddess called אשרה, and that they not only seem to have known her and had a reference for her, but that they placed her as part of the official Jerusalem cult, and as being worshipped by several representatives of the Davidic dynasty.[28] We can even see that two of the above passages, explicitly places the goddess in the temple of Yahweh in Jerusalem. Thus the next issue to be discussed is—naturally—whether the relationship between Asherah and Yahweh in the Old Testament is limited to co-habitation in the temple of Jerusalem, or whether the Old Testament transmit any tradition(s) coupling the two, as we have seen them coupled in the inscriptions.

27. Cf. GKB § 126.2.b. Whether all references to Asherah using the definite article can be seen as references to the goddess will be discussed below in section 6.3.

28. I am here referring to the Davidic dynasty as a deuteronomist point of reference, not as a historical fact. The problems of the Old Testament as a book of history is not the issue in this book, and will not be discussed.

6.2. *Asherah and Yahweh*

If we look at the direct and indirect couplings between Asherah and Yahweh, it is interesting that these references are only found in the works of the Deuteronomists. The chroniclers refer to most of the same events that the Deuteronomists do, but where 2 Kings 21 and 23 mention a picture or statue of Asherah, placed in the temple of Jerusalem, the chroniclers mention *ašerim* that are placed in 'Judah and Jerusalem', without any direct reference to any Asherah-cult in connection with Yahweh or the temple. In the traditional datings of the books of the Old Testament, Chronicles is written a good deal later than the deuteronomist layer, and if the layer of Chronicles is indeed a later layer of tradition than that of the Deuteronomists, the reason for this could be that the polemics of the Deuteronomists had worked, and that the 'evil' cult for the goddess had indeed been vanquished.[29]

The only verse directly connecting Yahweh and Asherah that has not been discussed so far is Deut. 16.21, which is where I will start.

6.2.1. *Deuteronomy 16.21*

> Do not plant for yourself an ašerah of wood,[30] beside the altar of Yahweh
> your god, which you will make for yourself.

This verse is used for many things, among others to claim that the cult for (or, of the) asherah or Asherah was common practice; or as the definitive proof that the אשרה of the Old Testament was a wooden pole or a living tree. The latter is partly done via the verb, which is understood literally as 'to plant', and via an understanding of כל־עץ as 'any kind of tree'. These two, in combination with the Septuagint translation of אשרה, have been seen as the definitive proof.[31]

It seems highly dubious to insist that the verb √נטע can only be used of planting a tree. As Reed notices, it is used as something one can do

29. Another possible explanation could be that the chroniclers wrote their version in a different geographical setting, where the goddess simply was not known, at least not the goddess Asherah.

30. Or, 'full of wood'; or, 'of any tree'; or, 'full of trees'; or, 'an ašerah', or 'any (kind of) tree'.

31. Cf. e.g. Lipiński 1980. On Asherah in the LXX, see section 6.4.1.

with both tents and persons.[32] Since most scholars advocating the
'living tree' translation of אשרה are very enthusiastic about the Sep-
tuagint version, it seems strange, that most do not comment on the
Septuagint translation of כל־עץ in this verse. This could be because
this version is something of a hindrance for the understanding of אשרה
as a living tree since it is translated with ξύλον, which is never used of
any kind of living tree but has the rather exclusive meaning of timber
and other kinds of 'dead wood'.

Now, if we assume that this verse is part of the ongoing deuterono-
mistic polemic against Asherah (e.g. Olyan 1988: 73), then the quali-
fication כל־עץ becomes highly interesting. That it is necessary to qual-
ify an אשרה as being כל־עץ must mean that this was not the obvious
thing to think. If the אשרה was at all times a wooden thing, or if the
word never referred to anything but a thing made out of wood, then
there would be no reason to add that one was not allowed to make an
Asherah of wood. If we were to make a very sharp distinction then
the relevant question to ask in connection with this verse would be,
'And what if the Asherah is made of clay or stone? are we then
allowed to make one?'

The second very interesting aspect of this verse is that it does not
issue a general prohibition against making an Asherah, but a very spe-
cific one: one must not make an Asherah in order to set it beside the
altar of Yahweh. Again, the obvious question to ask is 'But may the
Asherah be placed in other locations?'

The reason for this very specific prohibition could be that no one
dreamt of making an Asherah out of any other material than wood, or
of placing this anywhere but beside the altar of Yahweh. One cannot,
however, use this verse as proof that it was 'common practice' to have
a wooden Asherah beside the altar of Yahweh.[33] There is no reason to
forbid something that nobody does anyway, but to claim that any pro-
hibition is based on a 'common practice' is taking the thing too far.
There is no reason to believe that rape or paedophilia are 'common
customs' even though most legislations forbid them. Such things
happen and they are forbidden, but they are hardly common practice.

32. Cf. Reed 1949: 32. √נטע is used of what to do with tabernacles in Dan.
11.45, and of people in, e.g., Jer. 24.6.

33. So Olyan 1988: 9. Ahlström 1984: 8 writes (on Lev. 11.29), 'Like most pro-
hibitive laws, this one probably originated as a reaction against a common custom.'
The same argument could be used in connection with this verse (and is).

This verse, then, can only be used to indicate that Asherah could be placed beside the altar of Yahweh, and that the group trying to get rid of this Asherah are very particular about forbidding her co-existence with Yahweh. The verse also indicates that it would not of necessity be obvious to the reader or listener that an Asherah was a thing made of wood. So in spite of its content and probable intention, this verse does indicate a close connection between Yahweh and Asherah.

6.2.2. *2 Kings 18.4*
Since this verse is often cited as one of the passages in the Old Testament that proves close ties between the cult of Asherah and that of Yahweh (e.g. Olyan 1988: 70) we have to look closer into it.

> He [Hezekiah] had the high places removed, and he crushed the images and he cut the Ašerah, and he broke the copper-snake that Moses had made, for until these days, the sons of Israel had burned incense to it and he called him Nehuštan.

This verse is often seen as a cleansing of the temple of Jerusalem, more or less as the first serious cult reform there, but—as is obvious—the verse contains no reference whatsoever to the temple of Jerusalem, just as this location is not mentioned in any of the preceding or following verses. We are the ones presupposing that both Asherah and Nehuštan have their natural place in the temple of Jerusalem (e.g. Pedersen 1960 II: 192)

The first part of the list is well known from other passages of deuteronomistic polemics against 'foreign gods', but Nehuštan, or a cult involving a snake made of copper, is only mentioned in this one verse. This could be because the author of this verse is right, in so far as he is not referring to a tradition of snake-cult as such, but that the only kind of 'snake-cult' known (at his time at least) was the idolization of the Mosaic copper-snake.

The copper-snake and Asherah, though, are not connected to each other, just as none of them are connected to the 'idols', or *mazzebot*, or to the 'high-places', or *bamot*; each of the four are treated in their own sentence with their own verb. This means that we are not being presented with any close connection between Yahweh and Asherah or with any placement of Asherah in the temple of Jerusalem, just as we are not given reason to believe that the cult of Asherah had close connections to the snake-cult, Nehuštan or the two stock-abominations mentioned.

6.2.3. *2 Kings 21.7 and 23.4-7*

These two passages have been discussed above, so this section will be a rather short summary of the argument. The only verse not discussed above is 2 Kgs 23.6, which is why we will start there.

In this verse was again found the definite article in front of the word האשרה. As was touched upon in section 6.1.5, it is possible to see this definite article as a limited definition, whether we are dealing with a DN or with an ordinary noun—at least this was the case when dealing with the word בעל. In the same section, I noted that it was possible to understand the definite article as having the same function with the word אשרה, but if this understanding is to be maintained we run into serious problems with this verse.

What happens to Asherah in this verse is not something that can happen to a goddess, but only to an object: the goddess herself can hardly be milled to dust and burned, only an object can.[34] Now, in 21.7 it is stated that Manasseh places a picture or statue of Asherah in the temple of Jerusalem, and in 23.4 vessels of Asherah are mentioned, so it seems probable that in this verse there is a synthesis of the goddess and the object.

If we are indeed dealing with a goddess in the Old Testament texts, and if we take our point of departure in Olyan's proposal, that is, that the Deuteronomists are running a mud-slinging campaign against her in order to dissociate the goddess from the cult of Yahweh, it is, polemically speaking, a brilliant move to claim that the goddess is nothing but an object that can be pulverized and burned. If the asherah or Asherah was indeed a goddess, this could not happen to her.[35]

In both passages discussed here (2 Kgs 21.7 and 23.4-7) we are probably dealing with a rather desperate attempt to dethrone a goddess whose natural place was beside Yahweh in the temple of Jerusalem. Verse 23.5 names a cult for Baal and a number of astral deities who are worshipped 'in the high places in the cities of Judah and in the places round about Jerusalem'(KJV), but it is significant that Asherah is not mentioned in this connection. She is not part of the cult outside the temple, but she *is* part of the official temple cult in

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34. And then again, perhaps it is something that can happen to a god or goddess, cf. the Ugaritic texts, where Anat treats Mot in much the same way (*CTA* 6.II.31-37), since she—among other things—cuts him to pieces, burns him and grinds him.

35. An elaboration of the relationship between goddess and object is found below, in section 6.4.

Jerusalem, since she is specified in the cleansing of the temple, and since we are told of her being placed in the temple of Solomon in 21.7.

This, then, coupled with the indications found in Deut. 16.4 and the knowledge gleaned from the epigraphic material discussed in section 5, can only lead us to the conclusion that the Deuteronomists had a very definite referent for the word אשרה; they knew a goddess bearing that name, they opposed the traditional point of view that she was a natural part of the official Yahwist cult in the temple of Jerusalem, and they polemized against her being worshipped by king and commoner.

Since we must assume that the Deuteronomists were in no way happy to pass on a tradition of a goddess having her natural place in the temple of Jerusalem, just as they must have felt very badly about any gods but their own one being worshipped, the fact that they mention it at all can only be explained as one of two things: sloppy redaction of older materials—a not very feasible solution to my mind—or the fact that everyone knew Asherah to be a goddess whose natural place was alongside Yahweh in the central temple of Jerusalem; the deuteronomists would lose their credibility if they claimed otherwise. When the Old Testament passages are read against the background of the epigraphic finds, the latter solution seems the only really feasible one.

6.3. האשרה = *Asherah*

Apart from the passages already discussed, האשרה is found in Judg. 6.25, 26, 28, 30; 1 Kgs 16.33 and 18.4. The following will be a discussion of these passages, with the purpose of throwing light on whether the definite article used with the word אשרה can be seen as a defining article as well.

6.3.1. *Judges 6.25-30*
This passage occurs in one of the two versions of the calling of Gideon found in Judges 6. Both can be seen as legends pertaining to the Yahweh cult and altar found in Ophra. The second of these legends uses the word האשרה. Here we find a Baal-altar, with an asherah or Asherah placed beside it, and the story presupposes that this Baal-altar is replaced by a Yahweh-altar.

The first of the two stories mentions no previous altar for Baal or Yahweh, but is finished in v. 24 with the information that Gideon is

building an altar for Yahweh Shalom. The story then goes on, with Yahweh calling Gideon again, this time to destroy the altar of Baal and the Asherah (neither having been mentioned previously) and to build an altar for Yahweh (which Gideon has just done).

The discrepancies between the two stories seem obvious, so we must be dealing with—at least—two different traditions pertaining to the altar and cult in Ophra, and of these two the traditional stand is that 6.25-30 is the youngest (cf. Pederson 1960 II: 157). The author of this passage is—in spite of the definite article—certain that the Asherah is a wooden thing, since it is supposed to deliver the wood for the burnt offering Gideon is going to present on the new altar for Yahweh.[36] We can, however, suppose that this passage is deuteronomistic, since the verb √כרת in connection with Asherah is a combination found only in this layer, and we can therefore, *mutatis mutandis*, assume the passage to be polemical.

The obvious result of this passage is that the definite article cannot be seen as defining the divinity in this passage, unless we are dealing with a very elegant propagandistic attempt to reduce the goddess to a thing that one can cut down and burn.

6.3.2. *1 Kings 16.33 and 2 Kings 13.6*
Both of these passages deal with האשרה in Samaria, which is why they are treated together.

1 Kings 16.33

And Akhab made Asherah, and Akhab continued to do that which offended Yahweh Israel's god, more than the kings of Israel that were before him.

2 Kings 13.6

They certainly did not depart from the sins of the house of Jeroboam, just as he misled Israel to walk in sin; and also Asherah stayed in Samaria.

Both these verses are dealing with האשרה, and in both verses the definite article can be seen as defining, not necessarily suggesting that we are dealing with a goddess but that we are dealing with *the* Asherah, the one of Samaria. We can however, without any reconstructions of the verse, understand the second reference to be a reference to the

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36. The passage recalls in many ways Isa. 44.9-20, where the 'idol' for the temple and the firewood for the oven come from the same tree. See also section 6.4.3.

goddess. That she remains can mean that the statue or *ašerah* of Sama-
ria (the 'groves' of the KJV) remained in place, but it can also be used
in a more symbolic way: that the goddess and her cult were function-
ing throughout. If this is the case, then 1 Kgs 16.33 has to be looked at
again. In the stories of 1 and 2 Kings we hear no word of there being
any kind of cult reform taking place in Samaria in the style of the Ju-
dahite kings, and we therefore have reason to suppose that the Asherah
mentioned in 2 Kings is the very same Asherah that Akhab is said to
have made.

If we then look closer at the verb עשׂה√, we find that not only can it
be used in the material sense, that is, to make something in the sense
of producing or manufacturing something, but it has an abstract sense
as well. This is seen for example, in Exod. 12.48, where it is used of
keeping or celebrating Passover, and in Deut. 5.15 where it is used in
a similar sense of 'the sabbath'. In the wording of 1 Kgs 16.33, then,
we can understand Akhab as either having some kind of idol for or of
Asherah made, or we can understand the reference to be that Akhab
celebrates the feasts and holidays of the cult of the goddess Asherah.

6.3.3. 2 Kings 18.4
This verse was discussed in section 6.2.2, but since the issue of the
determining function of the definite article was not touched upon
there, it will be discussed briefly here.

The verb used of what is done to Asherah is כרת√, and this indi-
cates, as it did in Judg. 6.25-30, that we are dealing with the deuter-
onomist level, just as it indicates that this refers to an object rather
than a goddess. This impression is reinforced by the listing of the
stock abominations, 'high places, Mazzeboth and Asherah': the same
list that is found in 1 Kgs 14.23.[37] Thus the definite article in this
verse cannot define אשׁרה as a DN, but it could—as was the case in the
above section—define the Asherah mentioned as *the* Asherah, this time
of the temple in Jerusalem, the one everyone knows. But, as was the
case with the passage from Judges, nothing hinders an understanding
of the use of האשׁרה as a polemical misuse. האשׁרה is not a goddess but
is rather a thing that can be cut down and burned. The mention of
Neḥuštan then reinforces this impression, they are both objects, but
the 'sons of Israel' treat them as if they were divinities.

As can be seen from the above discussions, it is possible to see at

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37. Here however, we find *ašerim* rather than *ašerah*.

least one and probably more of the above mentioned passages as having a reference to the goddess Asherah, and not to an object called by the same name. The remaining passages can hardly be seen as referring to a goddess, unless we reinterpret them as polemical. In order to clarify whether this could be the case, we will have to look closer into whether the goddess and the thing have other things in common than the name, or rather, we will have to examine whether the goddess became 'a thing' in the minds of the Old Testament writers and redactors, and how this could have happened.

6.4. *From Goddess to Object*

Since many of the scholars that are working with Asherah in 'ancient Israel', interpret the texts from Kuntillet Ajrud and Khirbet el-Qom in the light of the Old Testament,[38] rather than the other way round, it becomes necessary to deal with the complex of problems surrounding the Old Testament understanding of Asherah as an object. Following the discussions and conclusions reached so far in this work, it seems that the basic question is wrongly asked. The question should not be who or what asherah or Asherah was in 'ancient Israel' or the Old Testament, since we, from the epigraphic finds, can assume with a great deal of confidence that Asherah was a goddess. The problematic issue is that the Old Testament, on most of the occasions when it refers to this goddess, treats her as if she was an object. The more correct question to ask then, is 'what do the *aŝerah* and Asherah have in common' or even 'how does (Yahweh's) Asherah become an *aŝerah*?'

The following will elaborate on a possible explanation of this, and will likewise try to present a model for how the Deuteronomists could present a well-known goddess as an object, without colliding with the contemporary understanding of Asherah as a goddess.

The scholarly debate on this subject often takes as its point of departure the fact that the word אשרה in the Old Testament is most often used as an ordinary noun, denoting an object, and not as a proper name or a title. It also often presupposes that the information regarding אשרה in the Old Testament is correct. Thus partakers in the debate regularly state that we are dealing with an object that

38. So, for instance, Lemaire 1984b; Lipiński 1980; North 1989 and Meshel 1979.

straying(!) Israelites saw as a goddess. This object had to be destroyed, in order to restore(!) the pure, exclusive Yahwism.[39] The second error in the discussion is that it, more often than not, centers on which object is meant when the Old Testament reads אשרה. The most popular theses are that it is a tree, a sacred grove or a cult-stela made from wood. These hypotheses mainly build on the Septuagint translation of the word, the above discussed passage of Deut. 16.21 (see section 6.2.1), and—at times—etymology. The latter will be discussed in section 7.1, while the former, the treatment אשרה receives in the Septuagint, will be discussed below.

6.4.1. Asherah in the Septuagint[40]
In order to use the Septuagint in a discussion on Asherah in 'ancient Israel' or indeed in the Old Testament, one has to presuppose that this version transmits correct information on the religion of 'Old Testament times', whatever they may be. In order to investigate whether this is the case, I will not only look at the treatment Asherah gets in the Septuagint, but also the treatment that other 'foreign gods' are given. This is done to try to establish whether this version transmits the pantheon we know or can conjecture about from the Old Testament, the epigraphic material and from other material data of the area.

The word אשרה is, on most of the occasions that it occurs in the Septuagint, translated as ἄλσος, a 'grove' or 'glade', the only exceptions being Isa. 17.8 and 27.9, where the word δένδρα, 'trees', is used instead. One could not possibly misunderstand the meaning of either δένδρα or ἄλσος, which makes most scholars conclude that the matter of Asherah in both the Septuagint and Hebrew Bible can be closed after a successful investigation. The only exception is Reed, who looks into all occurrences of the word ἄλσος in the Septuagint, and not only the ones that are translations of Asherah (Reed 1949: 7). It is also used seven more times, and on the basis of this investigation, Reed suggests a reinterpretation of the common understanding of ἄλσος. He suggests

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39. So, among others, Lemaire 1984b.
40. The chronological relationship between the Hebrew Bible and the Septuagint is not irrelevant in this connection. It is, however, like many other topics touched upon, not the subject of the present book. I have included the LXX in the discussion since it is this translation that is behind most modern scholars' interpretation of Asherah.

that one reads the gloss as a designation of an object used in the pagan cult (Reed 1949: 6-9), rather than a grove. Among other things, he builds his reinterpretation of the word on the broader, classical meaning of the word, as a designation for 'a sacred area'.

Another common factor in the discussion of Asherah in the Septuagint is that most scholars note that 2 Chron. 15.16 and 24.18, translate אשרה as Astarte (!). This translation often leads to the conclusion that the people of 'Old Testament times' (whenever that was) could not discern between Asherah and Astarte,[41] or to the claim that 'an *ašerah*' was part of the cult of Astarte.[42] This necessitates a closer look at the texts to see if it is possible to substantiate any of these claims from the texts, or if the people of 'Old Testament times' did know the difference.

Excursus: The Relationship between Asherah and Astarte[43]

As has been shown in the above sections, Asherah is found both in the deuteronomists and in the chroniclers, but many factors point in the direction that the chroniclers did not know, or were unable to recognize, Asherah as a goddess. The following will concentrate on Astarte.

Astarte occurs as a name for a goddess a total of nine times in the Old Testament.[44] All other occurrences cover place-names. It seems that only the deuteronomists knew of a *goddess* by the name of Astarte, and a closer examination indicates that practically all the passages concerning the goddess Astarte connect her explicitly or implicitly to some kind of foreign cult. All the passages in the books of Kings call her 'Ash'toreth the goddess of the Sidonians', one of the gods and goddesses imported by Solomon to please his foreign wives.

Judges 2.13 tells us that the Israelites worshipped the 'Ba'als and Ash'taroth', and even if they are not explicitly called foreign gods in this verse, we may assume that they are examples of the gods worshipped by the neighboring peoples mentioned in v. 12.

Judges 10.6 mention 'the Ba'als and the Ash'taroth, the gods of Syria, the gods of Sidon, the gods of Moab, the gods of the Ammonites, and the gods of the Philis–tines'. Again, Baal and Astarte are used as examples of 'foreign gods' in this passage; they are not, however, seen as identical to the gods of the 'foreign nations'.

In 1 Sam. 7.3, 'the foreign gods and the Ash'taroth' are mentioned, while the following verse comments that the 'sons of Israel' get rid of the Ba'als and the

41. Patai 1965: 39 among others.
42. So Garbini 1988: 59-60. He could also base this assumption on the LXX translation of 1 Sam. 7.4; on this see below.
43. Astarte is usually translated to 'Ash'taroth' in the RSV and KJV.
44. Judg. 2.13; 10.6; 1 Sam. 7.3-4; 12.10; 31.10; 1 Kgs 11.5, 33; 2 Kgs 23.13.

Astartes. Again, the connection is made between 'foreign god(dess)' and 'Astarte'. 1 Sam. 12.10 presents us with a short version of 1 Sam. 7.4, and we must assume that it was more or less copied from this passage. Thus, it can also be assumed, *mutatis mutandis*, that Astarte and Baal are seen as 'foreign gods' in 12.10 as well as in 7.4, even if the mention is not explicit. The last reference is 1 Sam. 31.10, which tells us of a Philistine temple of Astarte in Bet-Shean.

In none of these passages is Astarte—directly or indirectly—connected to the cult of Yahweh, or is she seen as part of the official cult. She is unanimously portrayed as a non-indigenous goddess, and is specifically connected to the Sidonians and the Philistines. The polemic against her is not very specific: it only maintains that she is part of the impure cult conducted by foreign nations.[45] The male god(s) that are mentioned with her are Baal and—in the books of Kings—Milkom and Chemosh.

There seems to be little doubt that the Deuteronomists have portrayed Astarte as a thoroughly foreign goddess, not only is she not Israelite, she is not even Canaanite; she is exclusively connected to 'the Ba'als' and to the gods of other nations, and never to Yahweh or to any other indigenous cult.

Asherah, on the other hand, is a goddess who has close connections to the cult of Yahweh in the Old Testament. She is a 'native' goddess who, for some reason or other, is discredited and as such removed from the official cult. Astarte, however, is consistently portrayed as a foreigner. Only the cult instituted for her by Solomon is explicitly conducted on 'Israelite' territory; in all other relations she is known as a foreigner. This is the tradition that surfaces in the texts of the Old Testament, and it points in one direction—namely that the Deuteronomists could discern between the two goddesses. Whether their description is also an accurate one is impossible to ascertain. All that can be said is that they would probably not have got away with their positioning Astarte as a foreigner if she, like Asherah, was a goddess whose cult had 'always' existed.

The picture differs slightly in the Septuagint, since Asherah is at times translated as Astarte; on the other hand, Astarte is at times translated as τό ἄλσος, which is usually the translation that is used of Asherah.

In two passages, 2 Chron. 15.16 and 24.18, where the Hebrew text uses Asherah, the Septuagint uses Astarte. 2 Chron. 15.16 is probably copied from 1 Kgs 15.13, but see the discussion in section 6.1.1. The suspicion lingers that the Septuagint might have had a different *Vorlage* for this verse than the Hebrew text known to us. The Septuagint text was able to present us with a version where the offence of the dowager queen was that she was worshipping a foreign goddess, Astarte, and not that she worshipped a goddess. 2 Chronicles 24.18 is a passage that bears a close resemblance to Judg. 2.13. The major difference between the verses in the Hebrew text is that *BHS* mentions the goddess Astarte in Judges, but the goddess Asherah in Chronicles. The Septuagint might, then, in this case as well as in the above-mentioned passage, have used a different *Vorlage*, where as the Chronicles text was closer to the Hebrew text of Judg. 2.13 than is the case now.

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45. It is worth noting that not only is she not an indigenous 'Israelite' goddess, but that she is nowhere connected to the 'Canaanites' either.

As can be seen, it is possible to argue that both the passages that apparently translate Asherah as Astarte could be based on a different *Vorlage*. Thus, we cannot automatically conclude that the Septuagint translators were unable to tell the difference between the two goddesses, (nor can we exclude the possibility for that matter).

With regard to the passages of the Hebrew text that mention Astarte where the Septuagint translates as ἄλσος, it becomes impossible to maintain—in these cases at least—that the Septuagint translators could, at all times, tell the difference between the two females. At least some of the Septuagint translators might—like the chroniclers—have been unaware that any difference existed, and therefore have chosen to translate the 'mysterious' goddess into something they presumed their audience would know about, namely ἄλσος. That this could be the case can also be seen from the single occasion, in 1 Sam. 7.4, where we read of τὰ ἄλσε 'Ασταρώθ.

Thus one may conclude that, even if the Septuagint-translators were not at all times able to distinguish Asherah from Astarte, there seems to be little doubt that the deuteronomists could and did make a distinction between the two. Astarte is consistently portrayed as a foreign goddess, while Asherah—equally consistently—is portrayed as indigenous.

Returning to Asherah in the Septuagint, the next step is to look slightly further, and examine what kind of treatment comparable words or concepts get in this version. Apart from a look at the occurrences of Asherah or even of ἄλσος, we could look at the divine name Baal that is known not only from Ugarit and the Old Testament but from epigraphic finds from Israel as well.[46]

Most occurrences of 'Baal' in the Septuagint are not translated, as was the case with Astarte, but are only transcribed and read either as Βάαλ or even Βααλίμ. In order to take a shortcut, we can start by looking at the verses where both Baal and Asherah occur, and here we find one verse that shows an interesting phenomenon. In 1 Kgs 18.19, where there are 450 prophets of Baal in the Hebrew text, there are 450 prophets of τῆς αἰσξύνης, that is, of 'the shame', listed with the 400 prophets of τῶν ἀλσῶν. The Septuagint here places itself closely to the Old Testament 'tradition' that translates 'Baal' as בשׁת.[47] All other verses mentioning both Baal and Asherah simply transcribe his name, but in three instances something odd happens. In Judg. 3.7, 2 Kgs 21.3 and 2 Chron. 33.3, the divinity becomes τῇ Βάαλ: the male god acquires a definite article in the feminine!

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46. See Appendix 2, the Kuntillet Ajrud inscription b.

47. I have written 'tradition' since it is by no means a consistent trait. It happens that Baal becomes 'shame', and it happens that Baal remains Baal.

That a name or title is simply transcribed in the Septuagint is very common, and happens to most Old Testament persons and gods. What is of interest is the apparent change of gender that the virile thunder-god Baal is subjected to. This seems to point to the fact that the Septuagint translators had no idea whatsoever of who or what Baal was,[48] particularly if we take into consideration that the plural is also simply transcribed, and not conjugated into οἱ Βααλοί. If conjugated at all, one often reads αἱ Βααλίμ, another feminine, this time on a transcription of a Hebrew masculine plural. Translators who can mistake a very male god to an extent where they use a feminine article with his (transcribed) name, can hardly be expected to be fully aware of details concerning other divinities in the Syro-Palestinian pantheon. We might be dealing with conscious distortion, but we might also be dealing with increasing degrees of ignorance. A third possibility is that to the Septuagint translators, all 'foreign gods' were by definition female.

Whereas the deuteronomist authors and redactors of the Hebrew text could and did discern between the goddesses Asherah and Astarte, it seems unlikely that the Septuagint translators could all the time. It seems as if they had only a very foggy notion of who or what Baal was, and they do not always make the clear distinction between Asherah and Astarte that is found in the Hebrew text.

It can be assumed that they have translated these concepts into something they themselves knew and which they expected their readers to know of as well: namely the sacred groves or glades, ἄλσος. That this could be the case is further highlighted by the Septuagint version of 1 Sam.7.4, where we read of τὰ ἄλση 'Ασταρώθ, and by 1 Sam 7.3 and 12.10, where Astarte is translated as ἄλσος.[49]

Another possible explanation for the fact that the Septuagint translators evidently knew a little about the cult of Asherah and Astarte, and next to nothing about the cult of Baal, could be that the cult for

48. The gender confusion that Baal is subject to in the LXX is widespread. Twenty-seven out of 76 occurrences in the Old Testament are translated in the LXX with a feminine article. This amounts to more than a third of the occurrences, not including the number of times it is found with an article in genitive plural since this case-form is identical in all genders. In the book of Jeremiah the feminine is used throughout.

49. As far as I know, no scholar has tried to claim that Astarte was not a goddess, but a tree or a sacred grove. The assumption would be obvious if one looks at these LXX passages, but perhaps it seems easier to accept that a foreign goddess is a goddess than it is to accept that Yahweh had a consort.

one or both goddesses—with or without connection to the Yahweh-cult—was still active, whereas the cult of Baal was completely forgotten in the circles that created the Septuagint.

To sum up: the Septuagint seems at most times to have little or no idea of the pantheon of Syria-Palestine, or at least not to have the same ideas that the Hebrew text shows. One should therefore not treat the Septuagint as a truthful witness when it translates Asherah as ἄλσος, but only use this information with great caution, and ask the obvious question. If the Septuagint translators themselves had little or no idea as to the identities of Baal, Astarte and Asherah, where, then, did they get the idea of equating a goddess not with a (dead) wooden object, as the Hebrew text tries to indicate that אשרה was, but with living trees? The following section will try to investigate this question.

6.4.2. אלה *in the Old Testament*

If an attempt is made to find a word in the Hebrew text of the Old Testament that *could* be the name of a goddess or contain a name, but which is usually interpreted as a tree or a cult-object, in order to find out if the ground-work for the Septuagint interpretation of Asherah is laid in the Hebrew text, the obvious word to investigate is אלה. This word is—orthographically at least—a predictable feminine of אל and occurs a total of seventeen times,[50] but is translated with great fidelity as 'oak' or 'terebinth'.[51]

That the translation is not incorrect can be seen from the fact that all occurrences of the word can be understood as a tree, without doing violence to the text, but in some of these verses one could—with equal ease—read 'goddess' or understand some kind of representation of this goddess.[52] The following is a discussion of these verses.

It is practically only in the so-called historical books of the Old Testament that we find a mention of אלה that could be translated as 'goddess'; the occurrences in the prophetic books can only be read as 'a tree', unless one wants to run amok in major text revisions and

50. Gen. 35.4; Josh. 24.26; Judg. 6.11, 19; 1 Sam. 17.2, 19; 21.10; 2 Sam. 18.9-14 (4 times); 1 Kgs 13.14; Isa. 1.30; 6.13; Ezek. 6.13; Hos. 4.13; 1 Chron. 10.12. In 1 Sam. 17.2, 19 and 21.10 (RSV v. 9) however, it is only transcribed as 'the valley of Elah'.

51. This translation, like that of אשרה as 'a tree', is mainly due to the LXX.

52. Gen. 35.4; Josh. 24.26; Judg. 6.11, 19; 1 Sam. 17.2, 19, 21.10; 1 Kgs 13.14; and perhaps 1 Chron. 10.12 and Isa. 6.13.

reinterpretations of words. Nevertheless, one should note that both Ezek. 6.13 and Hos. 4:13 mention the אלה as a place where the Israelites sacrifice to idols and practice the ungodly cult.

Excursus: Isaiah 6.13b

The latter part of Isa 6.13 mentions an Elah as well, and since this is a highly problematical passage, it is singled out for special treatment. The relevant part of the text can be translated as follows (*BHS*):

> As the Elah and as the oak-tree, *Ašerah*[53] is cast down, <with the> *mazzeboth* of the high places,[54] her stump[55] is holy seed.

In the *BHS* there are no less than six different remarks in the apparatus on these few lines alone. As can be seen I have followed a good part of them, mostly from the Isaiah Scroll of Qumran, the only exception being the reading of Asherah, rather than the relative pronoun, a proposal put forward by the editors of *BHS*.

The most important features of this verse are the fact that the Elah and the Asherah are paralleled with the oak tree, the Alon. It is also very interesting to see that the stump—be it of the Asherah, or of the Elah, or of the oak (or of either or all of them)—is called holy. This last line, the one saying 'her stump is holy seed', could, of course, refer to what was written before the clause translated here, and if so, the referent is 'the tenth' that is destroyed in the beginning of the verse. It must, however, also refer to the Elah, the oak-tree and the Asherah as well, for the comparison is that the stump remaining of the tenth shall be holy, like these three things.

We here have a very interesting, but also puzzling and conjectural, glimpse of a cult for a goddess who was (also?) a tree, and there is a relatively direct parallel between three factors: האלה, the possible goddess; the אלון, the certain tree and Asherah, the certain goddess; the latter we know to be the case from the epigraphic finds. The tree that is a goddess is apparently holy in itself, but not only when it is alive: even when it is felled the stump is קדש, holy. But holiness is not necessarily something good. The holiness of the ark of the covenant is terrifying: it can kill or cause diseases, and in the 'original' meaning of the holy there is also the meaning 'set apart' or even 'untouchable'. So the stump of the Elah or of the Asherah is set apart, is untouchable and holy, just as one could imagine the Elah or the Asherah herself to be. It seems highly probable that this small part of a verse might be the key, the connection between the object and the goddess, but before continuing in this direction, the remaining occurrences of the word will be discussed.

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53. Cf. the proposal in *BHS*; MT has 'thus is she...'

54. I here follow the emendations noted in *BHS* as variants found in the Q[a] manuscript.

55. Or, 'her *mazzebot*...'

The use of the word in 2 Sam. 18.9-14, the death of Absalom, refers without doubt to a tree. It is only possible to make this אלה into a goddess by rather fantastic reinterpretations. I will not make the attempt.

In one passage, the story of David and Goliath (1 Sam. 17.2, 19) האלה is part of a geographical name, the valley of Elah, which is also the translation used by KJV. In Danish translations we usually find 'the valley of the terebinth', but one could, with equal reason, translate 'the valley of the goddess'.

The trait showing up in most of the remaining passages is that whatever האלה is or is not, things take place under it. Jacob buries the 'strange gods' and Joshua places a stone under האלה in Shechem (Gen. 35.4 and Josh. 24.26). It is worth noting that in spite of the KJV translation, the Elah of Shechem is not placed *by* the temple of Yahweh, but rather *in* the temple of Yahweh, במקדש יהוה. This is not necessarily a very appropriate place to have an oak tree, but is a very appropriate placing of a goddess.

The angel of Yahweh in Judges 6 and the man of God in 1 Kings 13 are both sitting under האלה, just as Saul is buried under האלה in 1 Chron. 10. The burial of Saul takes place in Jabesh, and the angel of Yahweh is in Ofra, but we are not given any geographical name on the placement of האלה in 1 Kings 13. It can, however, be assumed that it must be placed in the vicinity of Beth-El.

Apart from the passage of the burial of Saul, the above mentions of האלה in the so-called historical books are closely connected to well-known cult centres in the Old Testament; and האלה is seemingly always connected to great men, be they kings, prophets, judges or angels. This could lead someone like me to speculate wildly that we might (and it is a mighty 'might') be dealing with a de-mythologized reference to a goddess. That האלה is placed *in* the temple of Shechem and is placed in or at other Yahwist cult centres could indicate that we are indeed dealing with the goddess, the consort of Yahweh, and if this is the case, then this consort can hardly be other than the lady known to us as Asherah from the finds of Kuntillet Ajrud and Khirbet el-Qom.

This impression is reinforced by the parallels found in Isa. 6.13: Asherah and Elah are the same thing, even if the one seems to be a living tree whereas the other seems to be a wooden thing. Again, the Septuagint translation, ἄλσος, fits in well in this connection. So what we have is a word which, vocalized and unvocalized, can be under-

stood both as a living tree and as 'a goddess', and there is plenty of
circumstantial evidence, that this tree or goddess might be identical to
what is otherwise in the Old Testament called Asherah. What remains
now is to find a possible way for this living tree and the goddess to
have become identical to the wooden object that often seems to be
alluded to in the Old Testament when Asherah is mentioned.

6.4.3. *The Polemics of the Deuteronomists*
I have shown above that it is apparently only the Deuteronomists that
know of a goddess by the name of Asherah, and that they—as often as
not—connect the cult of this goddess to the cult of Yahweh. The
chroniclers apparently do not know the goddess, but only an object, an
ašerah, and they do not connect this object with the cult of Yahweh.

Since this seems to be the case, we must presume that Asherah dis-
appeared from the cult during the time that passed from the writing of
the deuteronomist layer to the time of the chronicler's layer,[56] and
that she, by late Hellenistic times, was effectively erased from the
minds of literate people. Since we know that Asherah before 586 BCE
was a known goddess in the Cis-Jordan, and that the Deuteronomists,
who write later than that, know her, we must assume that their dis-
cussions of her are polemic and that they 'turn' the goddess into a
thing by deliberately reifying her. We likewise have to assume that
their descriptions of cultic procedures and divine actors could not
move too far away from the known reality of their own times,
because this would make them less credible; thus they were unable to
ignore Asherah or to remove her completely from the context she was
known to function in. Their polemics against her then have to have
some connection with the known realities of their own time. This
leads to the conclusion that the אשרה of the Old Testament was either
a wooden artefact or a living tree—both seem to have been the case—
and that these were the object of a cult (cf. Reed 1949: 37). That we
are dealing with a manufactured wooden object could indicate that we

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56. If one wants to steer clear of the problems concerning the dating of the Old
Testament, particularly the problem of the time separating the works of the deuter-
onomists and the chroniclers one might have to assume that the chronicles-layer was
written in a different cultural context than that of the deuteronomist layer. If one
accepts the more recent datings—that is, that the bulk of the Old Testament was writ-
ten in Hellenistic times (so, e.g., Lemche 1992) this becomes a necessity, since one
has to assume that the two 'histories' were composed more or less contemporane-
ously.

are indeed dealing with an idol of some kind, be it statue, picture or aniconic representation.

Since it can safely be assumed that the deuteronomist-layer of the Old Testament can have been written no earlier than 586 BCE, it may also be assumed that the Deuteronomists had some insight into Babylonian and/or Persian cult and cult practices.[57] They might have known of a ritual similar to the one known both from the library of Assurbanipal and from a neo-Babylonian tablet.[58] The ritual describes how one, by performing certain rites and sacrifices, makes a wooden, gilded statue into a god, born of gods, that is, transforms the wooden object into a divine being.[59] If a similar ritual was in operation in Cis-Jordan in Persian-Hellenistic times, it is very possible that the cultic, wooden representation of the goddess, the *ašerah*, was seen as the goddess herself, as Asherah.

When this is compared with Isa. 44.9-20 we find a situation where the woodcutter cuts a statue from and warms his fingers by the fire made of the same log of wood; thus, ridicule and determined reduction of divine statues or representations can be seen to be relatively widespread. By ignoring the divine presence in the wooden object, the Deuteronomists can pretend that they are not dealing with a divinity, but rather with a manufactured object.

It is possible that the goddess was not only represented by a statue or some other kind of idol in the cult, but was also seen as being present in certain specimens of a particular tree: the oak or terebinth. If this is the case—which it might very well be, see the excursus on Isa. 6.13b—the connection is made. The Elah *is* the goddess, who is also Asherah, and *is* the tree; the Deuteronomists had an easy job. It is even possible, that she was not seen as being present in every Elah tree, but only in special specimens, with the name applying—eventually?—to the entire species.[60]

57. It is not even necessary to assume an exile to claim that the Deuteronomists could know of Babylonian rites, as vassals of the Assyrian, neo-Babylonian and Persian states, such as the states and cities in the area of Cis-Jordan, must have been influenced in some way, both culturally and cultically by their overlords.

58. The following is based on Jacobsen 1987, which discusses this ritual.

59. Among other things the hands of the woodcutter(s) and other craftsmen making the statue are symbolically cut off, so that it can be said that it was not the hands of living men that manufactured this.

60. Another possibility is that the name of the tree and the goddess became associated because of the similarity of their names, and not that the tree got its name

The connection between the goddess Asherah and the cult imple-
ment is neither that the goddess is a personification or hypostasis of
the object, nor that the same word is used of both; it is rather that the
wooden object, the *ašerah*, is de facto the goddess herself and that the
Deuteronomists are making a distinction that would not have been
apparent to everyone. The separation of Asherah and the *ašerah* is
then made by the Deuteronomists and signifies a polemical de-sacral-
ization of a goddess who could not be fitted into a monotheist and
centralized Yahweh-cult. The insistence on Yahweh as a living god
then reflects on the treatment given not only to Asherah, but also to
other not-exclusively-Yahwist phenomena such as the *mazzeboth*,
'high places' and 'altars'.

The Deuteronomists make a linguistic hypostasis by identifying the
goddess, the holy image or symbol of the goddess, and the name of the
goddess with a 'thing'. They take a religious code at face value and
turn the literal content into something ridiculous. Similar phenomena
can be seen in our time and culture as well. An expression like 'the
victory of the cross' is—naturally—a religious code. If one wants to,
it is quite easy to turn this into something ridiculous. Two wooden
sticks placed one across the other at right angles can hardly win
anything at all: it is rather a lousy weapon, actually. Now, a Sherman-
tank or. . . In the religious code the 'victory of the cross' could—
depending on the context—be translated into something like, 'the vic-
tory won by Christians (that is, those who believe in the crucified and
resurrected Lord Jesus Christ, and who see the cross as a symbol of
him and his Lordship), because they are righteous and are faithful to
their Lord'.

Another example of reduction of divine presence could be the often
repeated prejudice, that 'primitive' societies worship trees, stones and
rivers and the like; they do not. What is worshipped is the numinous
presence in those things, not the things themselves. To the uninitiated
it might look as if it were the stone itself that is worshipped, but the
initiate knows it is not, it is the god that is living in the stone that the
initiate worships.

6.4.4. *Conclusions*
To sum up, the situation found in the Old Testament is not dissimilar
from the situation found in the epigraphic material. Asherah in the

from the goddess—but this is a 'chicken and egg' discussion.

Old Testament is, in all probability, a goddess or the cultic representation of this same goddess. In the minds of her adherents, this cultic representation would be identical to the goddess herself. When the Deuteronomists pretend that the cultic representation is not the goddess, they are in all probability making a deliberate misinterpretation of the relationship between the goddess and the cultic representation of the goddess.

Exactly what the cultic representation was seems to be under constant discussion, but there seems little doubt that 'the *ašerah*' could be several different things: a wooden—aniconic—stela or column of some kind; a living tree;[61] or a more regular statue. My main point, however, remains: that the cultic representation—whatever form it took—was identical to the goddess in the minds of her worshippers.

In the Septuagint version, Asherah is seen as a living tree. However, in the Hebrew version the word אלה could be understood as a living tree (a terebinth) or as a representation of a goddess, the Elah. This Elah, or goddess, could be identical to Asherah, and if Elah *is* identical to Asherah, the 'missing link' in the discussion of who or what an *ašerah*/Asherah was, particularly concerning the connection between the Hebrew and the Greek understanding of the term is practically self-evident.

Asherah, throughout the deuteronomistic layer, was seen as an indigenous goddess, closely connected to the cult of Yahweh, whereas Astarte was seen as a foreigner.

The natural conclusion to all this is that both the Deuteronomists and the Septuagint translators had a very definite referent for the existence of a goddess beside Yahweh. Thus, it must be assumed that the cult of the goddess known to us as Asherah was very much in operation at the time the Deuteronomists wrote, and that the historicizing of her cult is part of their polemics against her: 'it wasn't right then, it isn't right now'. It can also be assumed that since the Septuagint translators had a very clear understanding of what the term Asherah denoted, that is, a living tree, this understanding was built on a still living tradition.

61. The kind of tree depends on the scholar. As can be inferred from the above, I would put my money on the oak tree. Another possibility, argued by Taylor (1995) is that it is an almond tree, which was heavily cut and pruned into a particular cultic form. Taylor also argues that the Menorah is based on the form of 'the *ašerah*'.

Chapter 7

ASHERAH IN UGARIT, ISRAEL AND THE OLD TESTAMENT

7.1. *Etymology*

One of the main topics in the discussion of Asherah in Ugarit, Israel and the Old Testament is the problem concering the 'real' meaning of the name Asherah. This discussion is to some extent futile, in as much as it is irrelevant what a name—or a title—'really means' or 'originally meant'. What *is* relevant is how a word, name or title is used in any given context, and what codes are hidden in the use of the word in the given sources. Nevertheless, the following will contain a discussion of what possible roots, and thereby 'original meaning' (?) can be hidden under the name(s) *aṯrt/'šrt/*אשרה. This is done primarily in order to clarify whether the material discussed in this book can provide any definite knowledge concerning the meaning of the goddess's name. Secondly, it is done in order to establish alternative possibilities to the two major hypotheses concerning Asherah.[1]

If one looks at the many etymologies that have appeared for the name Asherah, they are all grouped around √אשר, and depending on the scholar, the languages drawn into the discussion are Hebrew, Aramaic, Ugaritic, Assyrian/Babylonian[2] and 'Canaanean'.

Apart from languages with the relative pronoun, אשר, words containing the root can, in the languages used in this book, mean the following:[3]

1. One is Albright's interpretation of the name: 'she who treads on the sea(dragon)', and various subdivisions of this; the other is the 'sanctuary' or 'cella' interpretation (see, for example, Lipiński 1980).
2. If one works with an Assyrian/Babylonian root, it is important to keep in mind that this language operates with no less than 7 different *aleph*-sounds. Since the Babylonian goddess, Ašratum, is spelled with an *aleph₁*, any root using another *aleph* is disregarded. This is, however, only possible insofar as the relevant dictionaries have noted which *aleph* is used.
3. In this section, the following dictionaries have been used: *AHw, BGUL*,

Akkadian

> *ašarum.* To survey, overlook or take care of in order to obtain or maintain order; give guidance; teach; take care of; organize; examine; instruct; bring luck; favourize; march; advance.

> *aširtum (ešertu/iširtu/išertu).* Sanctuary, chapel, temple (place of congregation); the goddess of the temple (cf. Muss-Arnolt); a separate room in private homes for cultic purposes; a temple-shaped base, used for placing pictures and symbols (sacred); a 'place of grace'; a sacrifice or gift for the gods;[4] care; charity; guidance; an overseer; a female organizer or supervisor of sacrifices.

> *ašru (ašaru, išru).* Place; building complex; region; town; cosmic locality. Also = *šamu*, 'heaven' (cf. Muss-Arnolt).

> *ašratu.* Poetic word for 'Heaven'.[5]

> *ašartu.* Hard, useless soil; desert.[6]

Ugaritic [7]

> *aṯr.* after; to; towards; place; sanctuary; walk; advance; march; follow someone.

> *aṯryt.* lot; destiny; end.

> *aṯrt.* back; the backside; goddess; Asherah.

Hebrew

> אשׁר. to walk forward; advance; to be happy; to be light.[8]

Aramean

> אשׁר. Place; work; inscription.

> אשׁרה. Sanctuary?

CAD, CML, Delitzsch 1888, *GAG, HAHAT,* KB, *KAI,* Labat 1975, *MLC,* Muss-Arnolt 1905, *UT* and *WUS.* The information concerning which *aleph* is used derives from Delitzsch and Muss-Arnolt.
4.   Cf. *CAD,* only in old-Babylonian.
5.   Cf. *CAD,* with a reference to *Enuma Elish,* 4.1.141. No note of which *aleph* is the initial, but Muss-Arnolt also knows the word, and treats it as *aleph₁*.
6.   Cf. *CAD.* No note of which *aleph* is used.
7.   Apart from the above-mentioned dictionaries, Dietrich and Loretz 1984 has been used in this section.
8.   According to Garbini 1978: 193, also *benedire,* to bless.

'Canaanean'[9]

    'šr. Happiness, joy.

The list is impressive, and could probably become even longer, if other Semitic or Semitic-like languages such as Arabic or Egyptian were included. Looking at the abundance of meanings in the above list however, it seems incredible that only two possible etymologies have been discussed seriously over the years, namely, 'to walk', and 'sanctuary'.[10]

The majority of scholars who discuss the etymology of Asherah build on Albright's hypothesis that the Ugaritic title, *rbt aṯrt ym*, means 'she who treads on the sea(dragon)' or 'she who walks on the sea'. This hypothesis has already been discussed in section 4.1.1.1 and was shown to be highly improbable.

A similar hypothesis can be found in Margalit (1990), who claims that this is not a name but a title. He also takes his point of departure from the Hebrew √אשר, which he interprets as 'Follower' or 'to follow behind (in someone's footsteps)'. Taking this root, and using *CTA* 3.I.14-15[11] as his point of departure—a section where *aṯrt* probably stands parallel to *aṯt*—he finds evidence that Asherah is a title meaning 'consort', since a consort always walks in the footsteps of her husband.

Still another possibility is to see the name as a constructed noun with a basic meaning of 'holy', since most Semitic languages have a noun derived from √אשר meaning 'sanctuary'.[12] If this is done, it is possible to link Asherah directly with both the Ugaritic and the Egyptian *qdš*; it is also possible to explain the parallels between *aṯrt* and *qdš* in the Ugaritic corpus. Finally, it is possible to explain the *qedešim* from the Old Testament as Asherah's official priesthood—of both

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9. The word 'Canaanean' is used by *KAI*, and is utilized here *only* as a quotation.

10. That serious scholars are unable to use a dictionary seems ridiculous, which leaves one possible explanation for this state of affairs: that these two interpretations of the root are the most convenient for the majority of scholars. Whether this also means that one of them is the correct interpretation remains to be seen.

11. Regarding this text, see section 4.1.2.3.

12. This meaning is probably not derived from 'being holy', but rather from 'a place'. The constructed noun 'holy' is primarily derived from Mesopotamian *aširtum*, which is almost exclusively used of sacred places. See also Muss-Arnolt, who claims that this word is also used of the goddess of the temple.

sexes—who naturally have a title reminiscent of one of her names or titles.[13]

As a variant of this theme, one could see the Ugaritic word-pair, *atrt//ilt* as a parallel between two nouns: one with the meaning 'the holy one' or 'goddess', the other meaning 'goddess' or '*the* goddess'.[14] Dietrich and Loretz are so far the only scholars I have found who work from the hypothesis that *atrt* can mean 'goddess'.

From the texts one could with equal justification argue that Asherah has a function as a protector, a not unlikely function for the patron goddess of a town.[15] If we follow this lead, the translations possible from the Mesopotamian root give excellent meaning. Asherah is 'she who watches over us', or 'she who maintains order', or 'she who brings good luck, who favourizes'. These possibilities have—to my knowledge—no spokespersons.

If Asherah is indeed a name and not a title it is possible to imagine that a multitude of meanings have been understood, and even that some of her attributes derive from the name rather than vice versa. It is possible, from the extant material, to argue that she functioned as the sacred or holy one, as consort, as protectress. All are probable functions for a centrally placed goddess.

If, on the other hand, this is a title, both Margalit's proposal 'consort' as well as Dietrich and Loretz's 'goddess' seem probable. It is, however, possible that the title, like the name, could allude to more than one function, and could play with several possible etymologies, as the Ugaritic uses of parallells to Asherah show.

In short, it is not possible, from the extant material, to conclude definitely what Asherah 'really' means. The many roots make it possible to understand the name in far more ways than the present scholarly discussion shows.

7.2. Name or Title?

In the above discussion I touched upon the problem of whether we were dealing with a name or a title in the word Asherah. This section will seek to discuss and clarify whether it is possible to determine that

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13. See also the excursus on the *qdš* in section 6.1.4.

14. Regarding *atrt* = goddess, see Dietrich and Loretz 1984: 60.

15. In the Ugaritic texts, Asherah is seen as the goddess of Tyre, and possibly of Sidon as well.

this is indeed either a name or a title. In the material discussed so far Asherah is used both as a divine name and as a noun, and in some cases it is quite impossible to come to a definite conclusion on whether it is used as one or the other in the text at hand.[16] Both advantages and disadvantages come to the fore if one tries categorically to claim that we are indeed dealing with a name (title) and that this name (title) can in no way be used as a title (name). In both cases some problems are solved, and in both cases a new set of problems arises.

If Asherah is not a divine name, but a title—disregarding the meaning of the title—the entire discussion in section 5.3.1 on adding suffixes to names becomes superfluous. On the other hand, a new and complex question arises: which goddess is hiding under the title? If Asherah on the other hand is a name, the above mentioned discussion stands, as do a number of problematic passages in the Old Testament, passages which become very difficult indeed to explain without taking refuge in more or less rewriting them. The easy way out is to determine—based on the material at hand—that we are dealing with a word that was originally a name (or title) and that in daily use has begun to function not only as a name (or title), but also as a title (or name); whether one sees one or the other as 'the original' must be an arbitrary and highly subjective choice since the accessible sources give us no reason to prefer one to the other. Another theoretical possibility is that we are dealing with a name that *is* a title, or vice versa.[17]

To conclude: it seems most reasonable to assume that we are dealing with a word *functioning* as a divine name. This 'name' has, like El and Baal and most other Semitic divine names, a 'secular' meaning that functions as a title or as an ordinary noun; that the 'secular' meaning is not obvious to us does not prove that it is not there, neither does it stop us from putting forth different possible interpretations. My proposal is that this is indeed an official 'name-title' of the primary goddess of the pantheon. Furthermore, this 'name-title' shows the lady to be the female counterpart of the male high-god, be he El, Baal or Yahweh.[18] This facilitates the use of suffixes on her name, as is the

16. This is the case in texts like *CTA* 3.1.14 and 2 Kgs 13.6.

17. Like Caesar, whose name was, or became, a title, or Augustus, whose title became a name.

18. It is on purpose that I do not refer to the consort of the number one (male) god. It might after all have been he who was seen as her consort or son in any given culture or time.

case in the Kuntillet Ajrud texts; it gives a sensible solution to the tricky passage *CTA* 3.I.14-15, and explains how the deuteronomists could get away with using the word both as a DN and as an ordinary noun. Finally, it explains why a goddess can be called the same thing in cultures as chronologically and geographically separated from each other as is the case. Since it is first and foremost a title, bound not to the goddess's function but to her status, it can easily have been used of goddesses *we* would see as differing violently from each other.

7.3. *What's in a Name?*

The only question left now is the one that is the title of this section. Is it indeed the same goddess we are dealing with in Ugarit, Israel and the Old Testament? Or, framed more traditionally, 'who or what is Asherah in the three corpi of texts that this book deals with?'

From the material discussed, I do not think it is possible to maintain the presumption most participants in the debate concerning Asherah take as their point of departure: namely, same name, same goddess. From the material at hand, it is only possible to show that Asherah is 'the same goddess' in these three corpi of texts inasmuch as she seems to be the number one goddess of the given pantheon in all three, and inasmuch as she seems to be closely affiliated to the number one god. The other functions of the goddesses called Asherah remain obscure in all three text-corpi, and to this day there is no way of ascertaining any of the actual everyday functions of these goddesses, as seen in relation to human beings.

The only possible conclusion to this is that the divine name or title—be it Asherah, Baal or Yahweh—can give us no kind of certainty that we are dealing with the 'same god or goddess', not even within what we see as the same culture or the same historical context. A theophoric name—for example, 'Abdi-Aširta'—need not be referring to the same goddess in two neighbouring cultures, and there is no possible way of ascertaining that the same theophoric name borne by two people living in the same city at the same time is indeed referring to the same god or goddess. If one of the people bearing the same name had a 'foreigner' as one of her or his parents, then these 'same names' could be referring to gods or goddesses whose functions were entirely different.

The goddess Asherah, in Ugarit, 'Israel' and the Old Testament is not one goddess, but is rather the number one goddess in the relevant

cultures. These goddesses can have any number of common traits—among them the name or title borne by them all—but we cannot from the extant material determine whether their functions both in the divine and the human sphere were the same to any extent.

Appendix 1

LISTS OF SACRIFICES FROM UGARIT

CTA 30[1]

1. *il □>*[2] *il*
2. *dr b□*[3] *il*
3. *mphrt bn il*
4. *t□m□ wš□m*[4]
5. *il w atrt*
6. *hnn il*
7. *nšbt □l*[5]
8. *šlm □l*
9. *il hš □l add*
10. *□'□ spn □l*[6]

On the edge

11. *ug□t*[7]

Reverse

12. *b mrh il*
13. *b nit il*
14. *b smd il*
15. *b dtn il*
16. *b šrp il*
17. *b knt il*
18. *b ǵdyn il*
19. *<----->*

1. *CTA* 30 = *KTU* 1.65 = *UT* 107 = RS 4.474. Autograph: *CTA* II, fig. 76.
2. *CTA*: *b<n>*. *KTU*: *bn*.
3. *CTA* and *KTU*: *bn*.
4. *CTA* *tk!mn wšnm*. *KTU*: *trmn (tkmn) w šnm*.
5. *□l* in lines 7-9; *CTA* and *KTU il*.
6. *CTA*: *b'd spn <b>'(l/d)*. *KTU*: *b'd (b'l) spn <b>'l*.
7. *CTA* and *KTU*: *ugrt*.

CTA 34[8]

1.   *dqt'. ṯ'. ynt . ṯ'm . dqt . ṯ'm.*
2.   *mtntmnkbd*[9]*. alp . š . lil*
3.   *gdlt . ilhm . ṯkmn .* □*šamdqt*[10]
4.   □*šp*[11]*. dqt . šrprš (.?)gmm . d*□*tm*[12]
5.   < >□*h*[13]*. alpwšilhm . gdl<-->*[14]*. ilhm*
6.   < >*l*[15] *š . aṯrt . š . ṯkmnwšn*□[16]*. š*
7.   < >*nt*[17]*. š . ršp . š . d*□*ilwp< >rb'l*[18]
8.   < >*dlt*[19]*. šlm . gdlt . wburm .* □*b*[20]
9.   *rmṣt . ilhm . b'lm . dtt . wkśm . ḥmš*
10. *'šrh . mlbn .* □*npt . ḫṣ'h*[21]*. b'l . gpnš*[22]
11. < >□*' š*[23]*. iltmgdl . š . ilt . asrmš*
12. *rgll*[24]*. špšpgr . wṯrmnm . b'mlk*[25]
13. □□□□[26]*gdlt . ušḫr . ḫ*[27]*. gdlt . ymgdlt*
14. □□/□*lt*[28]*. yrḫ . gdlt*[29]

8.   *CTA 34 = KTU 1.39 = UT 1 = RS* 1929 n° 1. Autograph: *CTA* II, fig.80.
9.   *CTA*: *mtnt mn kbd. KTU*: *mtntm w kbd. UT*: *mtn tm nkbd.*
10. *CTA, KTU* and *UT* all emend to *wšnm dqt*; usually coupled *ṯkmn.wšnm.*
11. *CTA, KTU* and *UT*: *ršp.* The autograph, however, does not look as if there is room for the *r*.
12. *CTA, KTU* and *UT*: *šrp wšlmm . dqtm.*
13. *CTA* and *KTU*: *<i>lh. UT*: *lh*(?). Cf. the autograph, there is hardly room for both the *i* and the *l*, but only for one of these letters. The sign before the clearly legible *h* could have been an *l* or even a *g*, if the latter is the case, there might have been room for another letter.
14. *CTA* and *KTU*: *gdl<t>. UT*: *gdl<t> / gdl<m>*. None of the readings are evident from the autograph, which only presupposes a low-lying wedge with the triangle pointing to the left; this feature is shown by the following letters : *u, b, d, h, w, ẓ, k, r*.
15. *CTA* and *KTU*: *<b>'l. UT*: *<i>l.* The certain *'* of *CTA* and *KTU* does not show on the autograph.
16. *CTA, KTU* and *UT*: *šnm.*
17. *CTA* and *KTU*: *'nt. UT*: *<'>nt.* No letter before the *n* is visible on the autograph.
18. *CTA, KTU* and *UT*: *dr il w p<ḫ>r b'l.*
19. *CTA* and *KTU*: *gdlt. UT*: *<g>dlt.* The autograph has no visible *g*.
20. *CTA*: *<l>b. KTU*: *lb. UT*: *<->b.* Only half a cuneiform character is visible on the autograph.
21. *CTA, KTU* and *UT* all emend : *mlun. šnpt.ḥṣth.*
22. *CTA*: *ṣ!pn.KTU*: *ṣpn.*
23. *CTA*: *<-->ṭ. KTU*: < >*p/ṭṭ. UT*: *-?-?'*. an *'* is the only possible sign to be read on the autograph.
24. *CTA*: *wlll. KTU*: *w l ll. UT*: *rgll*(?).
25. *CTA* and *KTU*: *bt. UT*: *bt!*.
26. *CTA*: *<il>hm. KTU*: *il bt. UT*: *(h/i)l-m.* Cf. the autograph: the first character could be a *h* or an *i*, the second a *u, d* or *l*, the third is practically illegible, whereas the fourth probably is an *m*.
27. *CTA* and *KTU*: *ušḫry. UT*: *ušḫr(.ḫ).*
28. *CTA*: *b'l gdlt. KTU*: *b'l . gdlt. UT ṣml <g>dlt.* According to the autograph, there is only room for six letters, all very faint: first letter could be a *b* or a *ṣ*, second letter is an *m* or a *'*, third letter is a clear *l*, while the fourth letter looks most like a *p*; the last letters are, as *CTA, KTU* and *UT* note, *lt*.
29. *KTU* here adds *<kṯr>*, and there is room for either that or for some other divinity to

15. $gd\Box t$. $\underline{t}\Box mn^{30}$. $gdlt$. $pdry$. $gdlt\ dqt$
16. $gdqt$. $\langle r\underline{t}^{31}$. dqt.
17. $<\ \ >$. $\ulcorner\Box\Box$. $sbl<\ >\Box^{32}$. $dbhm$. $\check{s}<\ >\check{s}^{33}pgr$

On the edge:

18. $^{34}(<\ >lt$. $iltt<\ >$. $g)nqtm$. $d<\ >tm^{35}$
19. $\Box\Box\Box$. $\Box gdlt$. $wl\acute{g}ltt\check{s}^{36}$

Reverse

20. $<\ >mt\ \underline{t}l\acute{g}m^{37}$. $wyrdt$. $<\ >bb\underline{h}\underline{t}^{38}$
21. $gdua^{39}$. $lb\langle lt\ bhtm$. $\langle srm$
22. $\Box\Box n\check{s}ilm^{40}$

CTA 35[41]

1. $byr\underline{h}$. $<$[42]
2. $\check{s}mtr$. $<$[43]
----
3. $b\underline{t}l\underline{t}\langle\ <$[44]
4. $barb\langle\ <$[45]
5. $w\underline{t}n\check{s}m$. $\Box\ <$[46]
6. ilm . $w\check{s}\Box\ <$[47]
7. $y\underline{t}b$. $brr\ <$[48]

whom the *dqt* in the next line is sacrificed. According to the autograph, however, there is no text missing here.

    30.   *CTA* and *KTU*: *gdlt ṯrmn*. There does not seem to be room for an *l* in the 'lacuna'.

    31.   *CTA*: *dqt trṯ. KTU*: *dqt . ṯrṯ (trṯ). UT*: *(gd<lt d>qt)* . ʿrṯ.

    32.   *CTA*: *<-->(p/h) ʿnt.ḫbly. KTU*: *<rš>p ʿ nt.ḫbly. UT*: < >.*ʿnt. sbl< >*.

    33.   *CTA, KTU* and *UT*: *š<p>š*.

    34.   Letters noted in parenthesis are—cf. the autograph—partly erased.

    35.   *CTA*: *<g>dlt iltm ḫnqtm . d<q>tm. KTU*: *<gd>ly . iltm . ḫnqtm . dqtm. UT*: *-lt . il< >. gnqtm*.

    36.   *CTA*: *<-->ḫ . rty gdlt . wlǵlmt š. KTU*: *<y>rḫ . kty . gdlt . w l ǵlmt<.>š. UT*: *----r--gdlt*.

    37.   *CTA*: *<w>pamt ṯltm. KTU*: *<w>pamt ṯltm. UT*: < >*mt . ṯltm*.

    38.   *CTA, KTU* and *UT*: *<m>dbḫt*.

    39.   *CTA*: *gdlt. KTU*: *<g>dlt. UT*: *gdun*.

    40.   *CTA*: *linš ilm. KTU*: *l inš ilm. UT*: *--inš ilm*.

    41.   *CTA* 35 = *KTU* 1.41 = *UT* 3 = *RS* 1929 n° 3. Autograph: *CTA* II, figs. 81-82. The reconstructions of *CTA* are made from *RS* 18.56 1.1-53, which, cf. *CTA* I.119, is the same text. A general problem on this tablet is that the letters ʿ and *t* are very difficult to distinguish from one another.

    42.   *CTA* and *KTU*: *<rišyn.bym. ḥdṯ>*.

    43.   *CTA* and *KTU*: *<uṯkl.lil. šlmm>*.

    44.   *CTA* and *KTU*: *ʿ<šrt.yrtḥṣ.mlk.brr>*, cf. *CTA* 36.10.

    45.   *CTA*: *barbʿ<t. ʿšrt.riš.arg-->*, cf. *CTA* I.119 n. 2, the last word is probably *argmn.KTU*: *b arbʿt<.ʿšrt.riš.argmn>*.

    46.   *CTA* and *KTU*: *l<bʿlt.bhtm. ʿṣrm.linš>*, cf. *CTA* 34.21-22.

    47.   *CTA*: *d<d.ilš.š-----mlk>. KTU*: *d<d.ilš.š.ilhm.mlk>*.

    48.   *CTA*: *<.wmḫ--------q-->. KTU*: *<.>w< mḥy>x< w qra>*.

8. $ym<.>lm \; y\lq <$ [49]
9. $\square \lq g< \quad >s \,.\, w <$ [50]
10. $\square\square< \quad >rt \,.\, y\lq <$ [51]
11. $wal< \quad i>l \,.\, wbu <$ [52]
12. $ytk \,.\, < \; >\square\square t \,.\, ilhm. <$ [53]
13. $dqt < \; >\square \check{s}p \; \check{s}< \; >\square\square w\check{s} <$ [54]
14. $il\square \; < \; > \; lpw <$ [55]
15. $b\lq\square< \; >.\, a\underline{t}r<t$ [56]
16. $\lq nt \; \check{s} \; < \; >r\check{s}p \; \check{s} <$ [57]
17. $gdlt \,.\, \check{s}l\square <$ [58]
18. $rm\d{s}t \; ilh <$ [59]
19. $ksm \,.\, \underline{t}\square\lq m \,.\, < \quad >\square\square$ [60]
20. $d \; yq\d{h} \; \square\square \; < \; >\square \,.\, dbh\square <$ [61]
21. $\check{s}mn \,.\, rq\square< \; >btmtn <$ [62]
22. $w\underline{t}nh\square m \,.\, \square b\acute{g}r \,.\, ar\square <$ [63]
23. $kdm \,.\, yn \,.\, pr\square \,.\, \square m\d{h} \,.\, \square <$ [64]
24. $\square dbh\d{t} \,.\, bt \,.\, i\square t \,.\, t/\lq \; \d{s}\square <$ [65]
25. $l \; \square\square\square t \,.\, \check{s} \,.\, wl <$ [66]
26. $g\square \; < \; > \,.\, lnk\square <$ [67]
27. $\lq\d{s} < \quad >lin\square <$ [68]
28. $il < \quad >\square qt \,.\, \square <$ [69]

49. *CTA*: $<\lq>lm.y\lq<$----------$>$. *KTU*: $<\lq>lm.y\lq<rbt>$.
50. *CTA*: $(k/w)\;(\lq/t)\;(--->s\;w--<$--------$>$. *KTU*: $k\;\lq gml<.>s.\;w<.>\;k(?)p(?)\;<\;dqtm>$.
51. *CTA*: $wyn<t.q>rt.y<$--------$>$, cf. *CTA* 36.12. *KTU*: $w\;yn<t.\;q>rt.\;y\lq d(?)\;<b\lq l\;\lq nt>$.
52. *CTA*: $wal<p.l>il.wbu<$-------$>$. If one refers to *CTA* I.120 n. 3 the end of the line could
be $bu<rm...>$ or $bd<bh...>$. *KTU*: $w\;al<p.\check{s}l>il.w\;b\;u<rbt>$.
53. *CTA* and *KTU*: $ytk.gdlt<.>ilhm.<\underline{t}kmn.w\;\check{s}nm>$.
54. *CTA*: $dqt<.>r\check{s}p^*.\check{s}rp.w\check{s}<lmm.dqtm>$. *According to *CTA* I.120 n. 5, the following
readings have been proposed: Bauer: $k\check{s}p\check{s}\;np$; Ginsberg: $w\check{s}p\check{s}\;np$; Gordon: $r\check{s}p\;\check{s}\;np$. *KTU*:
$dqt<.>r\check{s}p.<dqt.>\;\check{s}rp.w\check{s}<lmm.dqtm>$.
55. *CTA*: $ilh<.a>lp.w\check{s}<.il>hm.<gdlt.ilhm>$. *KTU*: $ilh<.>alp.w\;\check{s}<.il>hm.\;gd<lt.ilhm>$.
56. *CTA*: $b\lq<l.\;\check{s}>.a\underline{t}rt<.\check{s}.\underline{t}km>n\;w<\check{s}nm.\;\check{s}>$. *KTU*: $b\lq l<.>\check{s}.\;a\underline{t}trt\;(sic)\;<.\check{s}.\;\underline{t}k>mn<.>$
$w<\check{s}nm.\;\check{s}>$.
57. *CTA* and *KTU*: $\lq nt\;\check{s}\;r\check{s}p\;\check{s}<.dr.il.w\;p\d{h}r.b\lq l>$.
58. *CTA* and *KTU*: $gdlt.\;\check{s}lm<.gdlt.w\;burm.lb>$.
59. *CTA*: $rm\d{s}t^*\;ilhm<.b\lq lm$------$>$; * here one might, cf. *CTA* I.120 n. 6, reconstruct $wmlu$,
as is found in *RS* 18.56.20. *KTU*: $rm\d{s}t\;ilhm\;<.b\lq lm.d\underline{t}t.w>$.
60. *CTA*: $ksm.\underline{t}l\underline{t}m.<$----------$>$. *KTU*: $ksm.\underline{t}l\underline{t}m.<mlu.w>m\lq r<b>$.
61. *CTA*: $dyq\d{h}\;bt<-->r.dbh.<\check{s}mn.mr>$. *KTU*: $d\;yq\d{h}\;bt<.ml>k.dbh.<\check{s}mn.mr>$.
62. *CTA*: $\check{s}mn.rq\d{h}<->bt.mtnt<.wynt.qrt>$. *KTU*: $\check{s}mn.rq\d{h}\;<.>nbt.mtnt<.w\;ynt.qrt>$.
63. *CTA*: $w\;\underline{t}n\;h\d{t}m.w\;b\acute{g}r.arb<\lq*$--->; * should probably be reconstructed like *KTU*: $w\;\underline{t}n$
$h\d{t}m.w\;b\acute{g}r.arb<\lq.\;\check{s}r>$.
64. *CTA*: $prs.qmh.<m\lq$----$>$. *KTU*: $prs.qm\d{h}.m<\lq lt>$.
65. *CTA* and *KTU*: $mdbh\d{t}.bt.ilt\lq \d{s}r<m.l\;\d{s}pn.\;\check{s}>$.
66. *CTA* and *KTU*: $l\acute{g}lmt.\;\check{s}.wl<$----- $l\;yr\d{h}>$.
67. *CTA* and *KTU*: $gd<lt>.l\;nkl<.gdlt.l\;b\lq lt.bhtm>$.
68. *CTA*: $\lq\d{s}<rm\quad >l\;in\check{s}<.ilm.$-------$>$. *KTU*: $\lq\d{s}<rm.>l\;in\check{s}<.ilm.\;gdlt>$.
69. *CTA*: $il<hm\quad .\quad >dqt.\;\check{s}<$-------$r\check{s}>$. *KTU*: $il<hm.>dqt.\;\check{s}<p\check{s}.gdlt.r\check{s}>$.

29. < >□□□□ <[70]

On the edge

30. < >*lh . gdl*□ <[71]
31. < >□*t .* □□*mn . w* <[72]

Reverse

32. < >□*t . dqtm .* □ <[73]
33. < >□*mm .* □*dlt*□□□ <[74]
34. < >□ *. l . sp*□ *. gdlt .* □ <[75]
35. □< > *. š . l .* < >*ib .* □ <[76]
36. □< >*l .* □*i*□□ <[77]
37. □< >□ *. b'lt . bt* <[78]
38. < >*bht . b . hm*□ <[79]
39. < >*kbd . w . d*□ <[80]
40. < > *. atrt . 'sr*□ <[81]
41. < >□*b . mdbh . b'l .* □ <[82]
42. *dqt . l . spn . w . dq*□ <[83]
43. *tn l . 'srm . pamt .* □ <[84]
44. *šdd . šmn . gdlt . w .* <[85]
45. *rgm . yttb . b . tdt . tn .* <[86]
46. *'l*□*h*[87] *. gdlt* <.> *rgm . yt* <[88]
47. *b .* < > *'. sbu .* < >*pš . w .hl*□□□[89]
48. □ < >*mlk .* < >*b . ym . hdt tn . šm*[90]

70. *CTA: <p.š>rp<.>w šl<mm---?dqt>. KTU: <p.š>rp<.>w šl<mm.kmm. dqtm>.*
71. *CTA and KTU: <i>lh*. gdlt<.ilhm.gdlt.il?>.* * *Bauer and Ginsberg (also CTA) lh.*
72. *CTA and KTU: <d>qt.tkmn.w<šnm.dqt---->.*
73. *CTA: <--->(b/d)t.dqtm.<bnbk ------>. KTU: <ilt.>bt.dqtm.<b nbk. šrp. w š>.*
74. *CTA: <--k>mm.gdlt.l.b<'l----->. KTU: <lmm.>kmm.gdlt.l b<'l. spn>.*
75. *CTA: <dq>t.l. spn.gdlt.l<------>. KTU: d<q>t.l. spn.gdlt.l<b'l>.*
76. *CTA: u<gr>t. š.l.<il>ib. ǵ<---rt>. KTU: u<g>rt. š.l.i<l>ib. ǵ< rt>.*
77. *CTA: w<'srm.>l.ri<----------->. KTU: w<'srm.>l.rixx<tltm.pamt>.*
78. *CTA: <-->t.b'lt.bt<----------->. KTU: w<b>t.b'lt.bt<m.rmm.w 'ly>.*
79. *CTA: <md>bht.b.hmš<-------->. KTU: <md>bht.b.hmš<.bt.il.tql.ks>.*
80. *CTA: <->kbd.w.db<h.k------->. KTU: <p.>kbd.w.db<h.k/p >.*
81. *CTA: < >.atrt. 'srm<.l inš.ilm ->. KTU: l.atrt. 'srm<.l inš.ilm>.*
82. *CTA: <t>tb.mdbh.b'l.gd<lt. ----->. KTU: < >tb.mdbh.b'l.gd<lt.l b'l>.*
83. *CTA: dqt.l. spn.w.dqt<------>. KTU: dqt.l. spn.w.dqt<.l b'l.ugrt>.*
84. *CTA: tn.l. 'srm.pamt.<-------->. KTU: tn.l.' šrm.pamt.<l   >.*
85. *CTA: <----brr>. KTU: <mlk.brr>.*
86. *CTA: <-- šmn>. KTU: <dd. šmn>.*
87. *CTA and KTU: 'lyh.*
88. *CTA: yt<tb.brr>. KTU: ytt<b.mlk.brr>.*
89. *CTA: b.< šb>'.sbu.< š>pš.w.hly(m/t). '<r>b<.š>p<š>. KTU: b. š<b>'.sbu. špš.w.hlym.*
'<r>b.< š>pš.
90. *CTA and KTU: w<.hl>mlk.w<.*>b.ym. hdt.tn. šm. *CTA <w.>.*

49. *l* < > *ṯ*[91]

----

50. *i*□ < >□*ḥ*[92]. *mlk* . □ □*rgl*[93] . *ṣqrn* . *b* . *gg*
51. *a*□ < >[94]. *arb'* *mṯbt* . *azmr* . *bh* . *šš*□[95]
52. *al* < >□[96]. *š* . *šlmm* . *pamt* . *šb'* . *klbh*
53. *y*□ < >*ml*□[97]*ṣbu* . *špš* *w* . *ḥ*□□[98]*m.lk*
54. *w* . □ < > . □*pm* . *w* . *mḥ* < > . *t* < >*ṯbn*[99]
55. *b* < > . *wkm* . *i*□□ < > □*tm* . *yd* < >[100]

CTA 36[101]

1.   <-------->*ṯ*[102] . *slḫ* . *npš* . *ṯ'w* <---->*bdm*[103]
2.   <-------->*mm*[104] . *ṯnšm* . *walp* . *l* <--> □[105]
3.   <-------->*š* . *ilš* . *b'lš* . *dgnš*
4.   <------>□*r*[106] . *w* . *ṯtpl*[107] . *gdlt* . □*pa* . *dqt*[108]
5.   <--->□□*nmgdlt*[109] . *bṯl* <--> *mrm*[110]
6.   <--->*lš*[111] . *b'lš* . *aṯrt* . *š* . *ymš* . *b'lknp*□[112]
7.   <--->*dlt*[113] . *ṣpn* . *dqt* . *šrp* . *wšlmm*
8.   <-->□*p* . *lb'l* . *waṯrt*[114] . *ṣrm* . *linš*
9.   <-->□*tlbb*□*m*[115] . *gdlt* . *'rbšpšwhl*
10. <->*b't* . '<->□*t* . *yrtḥlmlk*[116] . *brr*

91.   *KTU: l.*< *'ṯtr>t*, according to *CTA* I.120 n. 17, this was originally proposed by Bauer.
92.   *CTA: i(d/b)<?.d>bḥ. KTU: id<.yd>bḥ* Ginsberg (also *CTA*): *id(?)<k? d>bḥ*.
93.   *CTA* and *KTU: l prgl*.
94.   *CTA; ar<b'.>. KTU: ar<b>'*.
95.   *CTA: šr<?>. KTU: šr<p>*.
96.   *CTA: al<p.w>. KTU: al<p.>w*.
97.   *CTA: yr<->mlk. KTU: yr<gm.>mlk*. Ginsberg (also *CTA*): *yr<ḫ>*.
98.   *CTA* and *KTU: ḥl*.
99.   *CTA: w.(ṣ/l)<-->.ypm.w.mḥ   <--->.t<ṯ>ṯbn.(?)<?>. KTU: w.l<bš>n.ypm.w.mḥ<p nh.>.t<ṯ>ṯbn*.
100. *CTA: b.<--?>.w.km.iṯ<.>y<--->šqm.yd<?>. KTU: b.b<t>.w km.iṯ y<šu. l.> šmm. yd<ḫ>*.
101. *CTA* 36 = *KTU* 1.47 = *UT* 9b = RS 1929 nº 9. Autograph: *CTA* II, fig. 83.
102. *KTU:* <   *b ymḥd>ṯ*.
103. *CTA:* <--*k>bdm. KTU* <*ṯn>kbdm*.
104. *KTU: šl>mm*.
105. *CTA* and *KTU: l<-->n*.
106. *KTU 'ṯ>tr*.
107. Cf. *CTA* I.122 n. 3, read perhaps: *wṯṯ pl. KTU: w<.>'ṯtpl*.
108. *CTA* and *KTU:* <*ṣ>pn.dqt*.
109. *CTA* and *KTU: al>p 'nt*.
110. *CTA* and *KTU: bṯlṯ mrm*, or, cf *CTA* I.122 n. 5, *bṯlṯ tmrm*.
111. *CTA* and *KTU: i>lš*.
112. *CTA:* <*b'>l knp. KTU b'l knp g*.
113. *CTA:* <------*g>dlt. KTU:* <*dlt   >gdlt*.
114. *CTA* and *KTU: a>lp.lb'l.waṯrt*.
115. *CTA:* <*ilm---->.lbbmm*. Bauer and Ginsberg (also *CTA*): *lbdmm. KTU* <*ilm.gdl>t.l bbtm*.
116. *CTA* and *KTU:* <*mlk.b ar>b't.'<š>rt.yrtḥṣ*.*mlk*. * according to *CTA* I:122 n. 12, the

11. $<->at . y<--->n . al<-->m . yrḫstšrt$[117]
12. $<->□n . □<-->□m . w□□□qrt<-->$[118]
13. $<--> m <---> grtš . □bd . wš$[119]
14. $<-------> □ . wš <-->b'l$[120] $. spn$
15. $<--------->. wš <->□mm$[121] $. kmm$
16. $<---------> k□<-->m . □npš$[122]
17. $<---------> □ <--> š . 'nt ltn$[123]

On the edge[124]

CTA: $<$ $> w <n>p<š---->$
KTU: $<$ $>w np<š$ $>$

CTA 37[125]

1. $<------>. □ <$[126]
2. $<----->t . š li <$[127]
3. $<---->rt . š□ <$[128]
4. $<---->□pdr <$[129]
5. $□in a□dh <$[130]
6. $l'ṭtrt <$
7. $'lm . km□ <$[131]
8. $wbṭlṭ . ṣ <$[132]
9. $lll . pr <$
10. $mitš ' <$[133]

last sign is a ṣ even though the autograph clearly shows an *l*; the text is reconstructed from *RS* 18.56:3.

117. *CTA* and *KTU*: $<b ym.ml>at.y<-->ṭn$ (*KTU*: $y<ql>ṭn).alpm.yrḫ.'šrt$). *CTA* I.122 n. 15 notices a double word-divider here, since the ṣ would give no meaning in the context. Bauer and Ginsberg (also *CTA*): *yrḫ tšrt*. Gordon (also *CTA*): *yrḫ (../2)tšrt*.

118. *CTA*: $<-->pn.<-->m.w<ynt> qrt$. *KTU*: $<l b'l.ṣ>pn.d<q>tm.w<yn>t qrt$.

119. *CTA*: $<----->rt<š.> kbd.wš$. *KTU*: $<w mtntm.w š.>l rm<š.> kbd.w š$.

120. *CTA*: $<--------al>p.wš.<l>b'l$. *KTU*: $<l šlm.kbd.al>p w š.<l>b'l$.

121. *CTA*: $<-------šrp>.wš<l>mm$. *KTU*: $<dqt.l špn. šrp>w šlmm$.

122. *CTA*: $<------------>kdm.wnpš$. Bauer (also *CTA*): *knpš*, Ginsberg (also *CTA*): *knp š*, *KTU*: $<w b bt.b'l.ugr>t kb<d>m.w npš$.

123. So the autograph and *UT. CTA*: $<-----------b>'<l. š>.'nt ṣpn.KTU$: $<ilib.gdlt. il. š.b>'<l.> š.'nt. ṣpn$.

124. This part of the text is not shown in the autograph.

125. *CTA* 37 = *KTU* 1.49 = *UT* 22 = RS 1929 nº 22. Autograph: *CTA* II fig. 84.

126. *CTA*: $<$ $>.-- <$ $>. KTU$: $<$ $>.tx < >.$

127. *CTA*: $<---->t. š li<l. KTU$: $<$ $>t. š l i<l$.

128. *CTA*: $<--aṭ>rt. š< . KTU$: $<$ $aṭ>rt. š l<$.

129. The letter immediately before the lacuna could be an *l, i* or a *d. CTA*: $<--->lpdr< . KTU$: $< a>lp dr<$.

130. *CTA* and *KTU*: *ṣin aḥdh<* .

131. *CTA* and *KTU*: *kmm <* .

132. *CTA* and *KTU*: *ṣ<in* .

133. *CTA* and *KTU*: *š '<rt >.*

11. □ *'r* . □ <[134]
12. <-> □*yu*□ <[135]

CTA 38[136]

1.   <-----> □□ <[137]
2.   <---->*su* . *i*□□ <[138]
3.   <-->□ . *l'ṯtr*□ <[139]
4.   <-->□*ilt* . *šl'*□□□ <[140]
5.   <->□*r*[141] . *lpdrṯṯ* . *ṣ* <[142]
6.   *tšnpn* . *'lm* . *k*□ <[143]
7.   *w* . *lll* . *'ṣrm* . *w* <
8.   *kmm* . *w (.) in'ṣr* <[144]
9.   *w* . *mit* . *š'rty* <[145]
10. *w* . *kdr* . *w* . *nptt* <[146]
11. *w* . *ksp* . *y'db*□ <[147]

CTA 45[148]

1.   > □□□ . □ <[149]
2.   > □ *rb'* □ <[150]
3.   > □*dš* <[151]
4.   > *šu*□ <[152]
5.   > □*g*□ <[153]

134. *CTA* and *KTU*: *ptr.k*<   >.
135. *KTU*: < >*yu*< >. After this line, *KTU* registers two additional lines on the reverse of the tablet. The lines read: *ml*< > and *y*< >.
136. *CTA* 38 = *KTU* 1.50 = *UT* 23 = *RS* 1.23. Autograph: *CTA* II, fig. 85.
137. *CTA* and *KTU*: > *'ṯ*<*trt*.
138. *CTA*: <-?*k*>*su* . *ilt** < . *ilt* is read according to *CTA* 47.7. *KTU*: <*l k*>*su.ilt*<>.
139. *CTA*: <*ṯl*>*t.l'ṯtrt*< >. *KTU*: <*w.*>*ṯṯ.l 'ṯtrt*< >.
140. *CTA*: < >*lilt**.*š l'ṯt*<*rt*. * Should be reconstructed with Ginsberg (also *CTA*): <*š*>*lilt*, or <*w*>*lilt*. *KTU*: <*w.*>*l ilt*. *š l 'ṯ*<*trt*>.
141. *CTA* and *KTU*: <'>*ṣr*.
142. *CTA*: *ṣ*<*in* >. *KTU*: <*ṣin* >.
143. *CTA*: *km*<*m* >. *KTU*: *k*<*mm*>.
144. *CTA*: *in* <.>' *ṣr* < >. *KTU*: *in.'ṣr* < >.
145. *CTA* and *KTU* both note a word-divider before *y*.
146. *KTU npt.t*< >.
147. *CTA*: *y'db.*< >. *KTU*: *y'db.x*< >.
148. *CTA* 45 = *KTU* 1.57 = *UT* 46. Autograph: *CTA* II, fig. 93.
149. *CTA*: < *gd*>*ltm. p*< >. *KTU*: < >*l/ṣ tm.r*< >. Bauer and Ginsberg (also *CTA*): < '>*ṣrm*.
150. *CTA*: < >*arb'ṯ*< >. *KTU*: < >*x arb'ṯ*< >. *UT*: < >*arb'*< >.
151. *CTA*, *KTU* and *UT*: < >*qdš*< >. Bauer (also *CTA*): '*dš*.
152. *CTA*: < *k*>*šu.p*< >. *KTU*: < *k*>*šu.pš*< >. *UT*: < >*šup*< >. Ginsberg (also *CTA*): *i*<*lt* >.
153. *CTA* and *UT*: < >*agn*< >. *KTU*: < >*x.k s/z(?)a*< >.

6. $> \Box htt <^{154}$
7. $> by \Box <^{155}$
8. $> \Box nn <^{156}$
9. $> mm\Box <^{157}$
10. $> \Box <^{158}$

KTU 1.81^{159}

1. $\Box . \Box <^{160}$
2. $l p <$
3. $l . \, \Box <^{161}$
4. $l . m\check{s} <$
5. $l . ilt <$
6. $l . b\check{}l \Box^{162}$
7. $l . il . bt <$
8. $l . ilt . <^{163}$
9. $l . \d{h}\Box\Box <^{164}$

----

10. $l . r\check{s}p <$
11. $<->. r\check{s}p .\Box< \qquad >\Box g . kb\Box^{165}$

----

12. $<-->lt . q(b/d) <^{166}$

----

13. $<--> r\d{s}y <^{167}$

----

14. $<---> r\Box <^{168}$

----

15. $<--->\d{h}l^{169}$

----

154. *CTA*: $< b\check{}lt.b>htm< >$. *KTU*: $< b\check{}lt.>bhtm< >$. *UT*: $< >htt< >$.
155. *CTA*: $< >by.\d{t}< >$. *KTU*: $< >by.x< >$. *UT* $< >by< >$.
156. *CTA*: $< >n-< >$. *KTU*: $< >x.nn< >$. *UT*: $< >nn< >$.
157. *CTA*: $< >mm.g< >$. *KTU*: $< >x.mgx< >$. *UT*: $< >mm< >$.
158. *CTA* and *UT*: -----.
159. *KTU* 1.81 = *UT* 1004 = *RS* 15.130 = *PRU* II. 4. Autograph: *PRU* II, p. 13.
160. *KTU* and *PRU*: $l. p< >$. *UT*: $l.< >$.
161. *UT* and *PRU*: $l . \d{t} <trt$. *KTU*: $l . \d{t} < >$.
162. *KTU* and *PRU*: $l . b\check{}l <t(?)$. *UT*: $l . b\check{}l < >$.
163. *KTU*: $l . ilt . b<t >$.
164. *KTU*, *UT* and *PRU*: $l . htk < >$.
165. *PRU* and *UT*: $<l.> r\check{s}p . < >g . kbd$. *KTU*: $<l.> r\check{s}p . h < >ng . kbd$.
166. *PRU*, *KTU* and *UT*: $<l . e>lt . qb < >$. The signs might read $<l. i>lt . qd<\check{s} >$.
167. *KTU*, *UT* and *PRU*: $<l.a>r\d{s}y$.
168. *KTU*: $<l . > r\d{h}x < >$. *UT*: $<l. >r< >$. *PRU*: $l . < >r< >$.
169. *KTU*, *UT* and *PRU*: $<l . > \d{h}l$.

On the edge

16. $<--m>gmr$[170]

----

17. $<--->qd\check{s}t$[171]

Reverse

18. l . ˈ$\underline{t}trt$. $ndrg <$[172]

----

19. l . ˈ$\underline{t}trt$. $a\square\check{z}r$[173]

----

20. l . $dm\square <$[174]

----

21. l . $il\square <-\square>pn$[175]

----

22. l . $u(\check{s}/\check{z}t) <-->y$[176]

----

23. $<-------->mrn$[177]

On the left margin

$\square\underline{t}rl<\square>$[178]
$<-->\square<-->$[179]

KTU 1.112[180]

Verso l. 9/24
l $a\underline{t}rt.\underline{t}n$. $\check{s}m$

KTU 1.118 and RS 20.24[181]

RS 20.24	KTU 1.118
1. DINGIR a-bi	ilib

170. *PRU* and *UT*: *<l . el(?).> mgmr. KTU*: *< > mgmr*.
171. *KTU, UT* and *PRU*: *<l .> qdšt*.
172. *PRU*: *ndrgd*.
173. *KTU, UT* and *PRU*: *abžr*.
174. *KTU, UT* and *PRU*: *l . dml*.
175. *KTU*: *l . ilt <.> xpn.UT*: *l . ilt <.> pn.PRU*: *l . elt .< >pn*.
176. *KTU, UT* and *PRU*: *l . uš<ḫr>y*.
177. *KTU*: *<l .   >mrn*.
178. *KTU*: *< >b(?)ṯwlḫ/y < >. UT*: *< >ṯwl< >. PRU*: *lṯwl*.
179. *KTU*: *< > ž (?) b/ṣb (?). PRU*: *< > ž < >*.
180. *KTU* 1.112 = *UG* VII p. 21-26 = *RS* 24.256.
181. *RS* 20.24: Autograph: in *UG* V, p.379. Text version *UG* V p. 44-45. *KTU* 1.118 = *RS* 24.264 + 24.280. No available autograph; the text here is from *KTU*.

2.	*ilum*^{lum}	*il*
3.	^d*da-gan*	*dgn*
4.	^d*adad be-el ḫuršân ḫa-zi*	*b'l špn*
5.	^d*adad II*	*b'lm*
6.	^d*adad III*	*b'lm*
7.	^d*adad IV* *b'lm*	
8.	^d*adad V*	*b'lm*
9.	^d*adad VI* *b'lm*	
10.	^d*adad VII*	*b'lm*

11.	^d*IDIM U IDIM*	*arṣ w šmm*
12.	^d*sa-sú-ra-tum*	*kṯ<r>t*
13.	^d*sîn*	*yrḫ*
14.	^d*ḫuršan ḫa-zi*	*ṣpn*
15.	^d*é-a*	*kṯr*
16.	^d*ḫè-bat*	*pdry*
17.	^d*aš-ta-bi*	*'ṯtr*
18.	^d*ḫuršanu*^M *u a-mu-tu<m>*	*ǵrm w <'mqt>*
19.	^d*aš-ra-tum*	*<a>ṯrt*

Reverse

20.	^d*a-na-tum*	*'nt*
21.	^d*šamaš*	*špš*
22.	^d*al-la-tum*	*arṣy*
23.	^d*iš-ḫa-ra*	*ušḫry*
24.	^d*ištar*^{ištar}	*'ṯtrt*
25.	^d*ilânu*^M *til-la-at* ^d*adad*	*il t'ḏr b'l*
26.	^d₂*nergal*	*r<š>p*
27.	^d*dá-ad-mi-iš*	*ddmš*
28.	^d*pu-ḫur ilâni*^M	*pḫr ilm*
29.	^d*tamtum*	*ym*
30.	^{dDUG}*BUR.ZI.NIG.NA*	*uṯḫt*
31.	^{dis}*ki-na-rum*	*knr*
32.	^d*MA.LIK.MEŠ*	*mlkm*
33.	^d*sa-li-mu*	*šlm*

*KTU 1.123*¹⁸²

Recto

1.   *<---> ab . wil <t*¹⁸³
2.   *<--> ▢lm . šlmi <*¹⁸⁴

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182.   *KTU* 1.123 = *RS* 24.271 = *UG* V: 10. Autograph: *UG* V, p. 583.
183.   *KTU*: *<šlm> . il . w ilm.* The transcription in *UG*.V does not read the *t*, but the sign is easily read on the autograph.
184.   *KTU*: *<w> šlm. šlm i<l>*. *UG* V: *< > šlm . šlm i<l*.

3.   *<->lm . ilšr .*[185]
4.   *dgn . wbʻl*
5.   *ṯwkmṯ*[186]
6.   *yrḫwksa*
7.   *yrḫmkṯy*
8.   *ṯkmnwšnm*
9.   *kṯrwḫss*
10.   *ʻṯtrʻṯṯpr*
11.   *šḥrwšlm*
12.   *nghwsrr*
13.   *ʻdwšr*
14.   *ṣdqmšr*
15.   *ḥnbnildn <*[187]
16.   *<->bdw□□ <*[188]

Verso

1.   *<---> pil <*[189]
2.   *<-> lmtmrb <*[190]
3.   *qdšmlk□ <*[191]
4.   *kbddilg□ <*[192]
5.   *mrmnmn*
6.   *brrnaryn*
7.   *□?ḥntlyn*[193]
8.   *atdbwʻr*[194]
9.   *qdšwamr□ <*[195]
10.   *ṯhrwbd*
11.   *<->ṯrḫss šl□ <*[196]
12.   *šlmilbt <*
13.   *šlmilḫš□ <*[197]
14.   *ršpinš <*[198]

185.   *KTU* and *UG.* V: *<š>lm . il šr.*
186.   *KTU:* *ṯz w kmṯ.*
187.   *UG* V: *ḫbn il d<n(?)>.*
188.   *KTU:* *kbd w nr < >. UG* V: *> bdw < >. UG* V notes that the following is a lacuna of around 5 lines.
189.   *KTU* has a line before this, called l. 17: *< > n (?) r < >. KTU* 1.18 (= l. 1, verso here) reads: *< >l (?)/šp il < >.*
190.   *KTU:* *<ǵ>lmt mrd < >.*
191.   *KTU:* *qdš mlk i< >. UG* V: *qdš mlk...*
192.   *KTU:* *kbd il gb/d < >. UG* V: *kbd d ilg b* (?).
193.   *KTU:* *azḫn tlyn.UG* V: *aǵ (?) ḫn tlyn.*
194.   *KTU:* *atdb w ṯr.*
195.   *KTU* and *UG* V: *qdš w amrr.*
196.   *KTU:* *kṯr ḫss šlm. UG* V: *<k>ṯr ḫss šlm.*
197.   *KTU:* *ḫšt. UG* V: *ḫš< >.*
198.   *KTU:* *ršp inš i<lm>.*

15. □□□*rmil* <[199]

On the edge

16. <----->*mšlm* <[200]

KTU 1.148[201]

Recto

1. *dbḥ . ṣp* <[202]
2. *il . alp . w* <[203]
3. *b'lm . alp . wš* <[204]
4. *b'lm . alp . wš* <[205]
5. *arṣ . wšmm . št*□*ṭ*□□*š . yr*□ <[206]
6. *ṣpn . š . kṭr . š . pdry . š . ġrm*□□ < > *t . š*[207]
7. *aṯrt . š . 'nt . š . špš . š . arṣy . š . 'ṯtrtš*[208]
8. *ušḫry . š . il . t'šr*[209]*. b'lšršp . š . ddmš*
9. *pḫr . ilm . š . ym . š* < > □*r . š .* □ *k'ṣrmgdlt*[210]

===

10. □*šlmm . ilib . š . i* <--->*m* □*'b*□ *. ṣpn . al*[211]
11. *b'lm . kmm . b'lm . kmm* <--->[212] *. kmm . b'lm . kmm*
12. *b'lm . kmm . b'lm . km* <[213]

----

lines 13-17 in Hurrite

13 *iy . ṭl?md . pžp . ḫlbġ .* □ <-->*ṭl?lž . n* <-->□□ <[214]
14. *umnž . inž . mb .k??r . a*□ <-->□ *.* □*n*□*ḫ* □ <[215]

199. *KTU: drm ilm* < >. *UG* V: < >*rm.il*<.
200. *KTU:* <*w i*>*lm šlm.*
201. *KTU:* 1.148 = *RS* 24.643 = *UG* V: 9. Autograph, *UG* V, pp. 579, 581.
202. *UG* V: *ṣp*<*n . KTU: ṣpn*<*.alp . w š .ilib.alp.w š*>.
203. *UG* V: *wš*< *. KTU: wš* <*.dgn . alp . w š.b'l. ṣpn.alp.w š*>.
204. *KTU:* <*b'lm . alp . wš*>.
205. *KTU: wš* <. *b*>*'l*<*m .*> *al*<*p . w š . b'lm . alp . w*>*š.*
206. *KTU* and *UG* V: *š . kṭt*<*t*>*š . yrḫ* <*š*>. *UG* V does not read the final *š.*
207. *KTU: ġrm . w'm*<*q*>*t . š. UG* V: *ġrm . š.*
208. *KTU* and *UG* V: *'ṯtrt . š.*
209. *KTU* and *UG* V: *t'žr.* The third sign of the word is, according to the autograph, undoubtedly an *š.*
210. *KTU: knr . š.alpm.' ṣrm gdlt. UG* V: <. *k*>*nr . š.?. 'ṣrm gdlt.*
211. *UG* V: *i*<...>*...gb*< >*.špn.aš. KTU: il* <*š*>*.dgn.*<*al*>*p 'bl (b'l). ṣpn.al*<*p*>.
212. *KTU:* <. *b*>*'lm. UG* V: <*b'lm*>.
213. *KTU* and *UG* V: *km*<*m*>.
214. *KTU: iy . ṭlġmd . pžp . ḫlbġ . ḫxxṭlġlž . nxxžž .* < >.
215. *KTU: umnž . inž . md . kṭmr . a(?)/t(?)xxxm(?) . pnṯḫb*< >.

15. *ṯl?lẓ . pd . dld . inẓ . id* <-----> *t .* <[216]
16. *tgin . k?rtgẖnn . uštn* <[217]
17. *tz? . arm . ṯṯb . ṯuṯk . ẖnz*□ <[218]

===================================

18. *ktʻrb . ʻṯtrt . šd . bt . mlk* <
19. *ṯn . skm . šbʻ . mšlt . arbʻ . ḫpnt .* <
20. *ḫmšm . ṯlṯ . rkb . rtn . ṯlṯ . mat* <[219]
21. *lg . šmn . rqḥ . šrʻm*[220] *. ušp?tm . p* <[221]
22. *kṯ . ẓrw . kṯ . nbt .* □*nt . w*□*n* <[222]

Verso[223]

1.   *il . ẖyr . ilib . š*
2.   *awṣwšmm . ẓ*[224]
3.   *il . š . kṯwt . š*[225]
4.   *dgn . š . bʻl . ḫṣbalpwš*
5.   *bʻlṣpn . alpw . š .*
6.   *ṯrṯy . alp . w . š*
7.   *yrẖ . š . ṣpn . š*
8.   *kṯrš ʻṯtr . š*
9.   <-->*rt*[226] *. š . šgrwiṯmẓ*[227]
10. <----> *š . ršp . idrp . š*[228]
11. <-----> □*rgš*[229]
12. <------> *mt .* □[230]
13-18 lacuna[231]
19. <------> □*mt* <[232]

216. *KTU:* ṯlǵlẓ *. pd . dld . inẓ . idxxxmt. < >.*
217. *KTU:* tẓ (?)in . kwrt . ẖnn . užtn . x< >.
218. *KTU:* tzǵ . arm . ṯṯb . ṯuṯk . ẖnzn < >.
219. *KTU:* mat . š < >.
220. *KTU:* šrʻm (ʻšrm).
221. *KTU:* pl<d >.
222. *KTU:* ẓnt . w tqnt < >. *UG* V: ẓnt . wt(?)n < >.
223. *KTU* numbers the lines continuously, which means *UG* V, Vᵒ, line 1 = *KTU* 1.148, line 23.
224. *KTU:* arṣ w šmm. š.
225. *KTU:* kṯrt . š (Rasur : alp w š). The writer has in all probability intended kṯrt, but it came out kṯwt.
226. *KTU:* aṯrt.
227. *KTU:* šgr . w iṯm š According to the autograph, the last letter is a clear ẓ, but the letter š fits the context better.
228. *KTU* notes two illegible signs before the first legible š.
229. *KTU:* < il . t> ʻẓr . š.
230. *KTU:* < ǵl>mt . š.
231. *KTU:* 35-37 (= *UG* V. 13-15): lacuna. (38/16) < >knr <š > (39/17) < >mšr . š < >. (40/18) < >xt š . il . mx< >.
232. *KTU:* < >x . w thmt < >.

20.   <------> *š . s*[233]
21.   <-------> *lb* <--->*š*[234]
22.   <-------> *bglmal*[235]
23.   [236]

RS 19.59 V$^{o(1)}$[237]

1.   > . *ybšr . qdš* <[238]
2.   > *t btb . qdš . il(?)* <[239]
3.   ...*b>n . qdš . k(?)* <[240]
4.   > *'sb . < > ḥ*[241]
5.   > *b < > m(?) ttk . <*[242]
6.   > *k? . wtmt <*[243]
7.   > *k . wtt <*[244]
8.   > *k . wt <*[245]
9.   >*k(?)trm . lp <*[246]
10.   > *l...rlg<*[247]
11.   >*bn . w(?) <*[248]
12.   >*t . kn <*[249]
13.   > *tm . n <*[250]
14.   > *km . t'rb*[251]
15.   ......

233.   *KTU*: < *m>gmr <. i>l . sk<r . š >.*
234.   *KTU*: <*il . d>dm . š . il . lb<n>n š . x< >.*
235.   *KTU*: <*al>p . w š <.> b'lm al<p . w š>.*
236.   *KTU*: <*al>p . w<š>.*
237.   *KTU* 1.94 = *RS* 19.59. Verso in *PRU* V # 125, no autograph. *KTU* prints the recto as well, with the same line numbers as *PRU*. This means, that 1.1 in this appendix = *KTU* 1.94 1.23. Lines 1-21 are very damaged according to the transliteration in *KTU*. *KTU* line 22 : *wntmnx< >xt.*
238.   *KTU*: < > *x.ybšr.*
239.   *KTU*: < > *t btm < >.*
240.   *KTU*: < > *kb < >.*
241.   *KTU*: < >*'sb xxḥ< >.*
242.   *KTU*: < > *b . yt'k . < >.*
243.   *KTU*: < > *k . w tmtn < >.*
244.   *KTU*: < > *xzk . w att < >.*
245.   *KTU*: < > *xk . w šnx < >.*
246.   *KTU*: < > *rġrm . l pt < >.*
247.   *KTU*: < > *l šż (?)r . s(?)gx < >.*
248.   *KTU*: < > *w txbx . w xx < >.*
249.   *KTU*: < > *xt . kx < >.*
250.   *KTU*: < > *ttm . n < >.*
251.   *KTU* reads no text on the last two lines.

Appendix 2

INSCRIPTIONS FROM 'ISRAEL'

This appendix contains all the different versions and translations of the text that are discussed in Chapter 5. In order to gain a more uniform impression of the different readings, the reader could take several copies of the autograph found in Zevit 1984, and then—on these autographs—draw the different readings. This way one gets an immediate impression of the improbabilities involved in a large number of readings.

The Khirbet el-Qom inscription

Dever (1969–70)[1]

1. *l'ryhw . hqšb . ktbh*	(Belonging to) 'Uriyahu. Be careful of his inscription!
2. *brk . 'ryhw . lyhwh*	Blessed be 'Uriyahu by Yahweh.
3. *wm'rr . ydl 'šr thhwš'lh*	And cursed shall be the hand of whoever (defaces it)!
4. *l'nyhw*	(Written by 'Oniyahu).

Lemaire (1977)

1. *'ryhw. h'šr.ktbh*	Uryahu le riche l'a fait écrire:
2. *brk.'ryhw.lyhwh*	Béni soit Uryahu par Yhwh
3. *wmṣryh.l'šrth.hwš 'lh*	et <par son ashérah>, de ses ennemis (par son ashérah) il l'a sauvé.
4. *l'nyhw*	Par Onyahu
5. *wl'šrth*	Et par son ashérah
6. *r h*	

Garbini (1981)

<l> *'ryhw hqšr ktbh*	Ad Uria è stata aggiunta la sua iscrizione.
brk 'ryhw lyhwh	Benedette sia Uria da Yahweh,
wm'rr yd k l'šrt hhwš' lh	e maledetta sia la mano di tutte quelle (?) che 'malediranno' la sua salvezza.
l'nyhw	—Di Onia

1.   Dever 1969–70: 158-59.

Naveh (1979)

1. *'ryhw hśr ktbh*   Uriyahu the governor wrote it
2. *brk 'ryhw lyhwh*   May Uriyahu be blessed by Yahweh
3. *nṣry wl'šrth hwš' lh*   my guardian and by his Asherah. Save him,
4. *l'ryhw*   [save] Uriyahu.

Miller (1980)

1. *(l)'ryhw.h'š.ktbh*   [for] Uriyahu the rich : his inscription [or, has
                                             written it]
2. *brk.'ryhw.lyhwh*   Blessed is Uriyahu by Yahweh;
3. *wmṣryh.l'šrth/hwš'/lh*   Yea from his adversaries by his asherah he has
                                             saved him.
4. *l'nyhw*   [Written] by Oniyahu
5. *wl'šrth*   [...?]and by his asherah
6.   *r h*

Stolz (1980)

'rjhw. h'šr. ktbh
brk. 'rjhw. ljhwh.
wmṣrjh. l'šrth. hwš'lh

Mittmann (1981)

1. *'ryhw hšr ktbh*   Uriahu, der Sänger, hat es geschrieben.
2. *brk'ryhw lyhwh*   ein Gesegneter Jahwes ist Uriahu
3. *wmmṣr ydh l'l šrth hwš' lh*   und aus Bedrängnis heraus preist er den Gott
                                             seines Dienstes, der ihm hilft.
4. *l'nyhw*

Angerstorfer (1982)

1. *'wrhw . hśr . ktbh*   Urijahu, der Gouverneur, liess es schreiben:
2. *brk . 'rjhw . ljhwh*   Gesegnet sei Urijahu von Jahwe
3. *nṣrj . l'šrth . hwš' lh*   meinem Beschützer, und von seiner 'Ašerah.
                                             Rette ihn,
4-6 *l'njhw/wl'šrth/rh*   den Urijahu und durch seine Ašerah/...

Zevit (1984)

1. *'ryhw h'šr ktbh*   Uryahu, the prosperous, his inscription
2. *brkt 'ryhw lyhwh*   I blessed Uryahu to YHWH
3. *wmṣryh l'šrth hwš ' lh*[2]   And from his enemies, O Asherata, save him.
4. *l>'byhw*   by Abiyahu
5.< *>d/r/b'g/? wll'šrth*   < ? >??and to Asherata
6.< *>'??rth*   < ? > A<sh>erata

    2.   Zevit finds these words among the many he reads on the line. His transliteration of the
entire line is: *wmmṣrryyh/r hl'lš'rttrhhwšlh.*

Lemaire (1984b)

1. Uryahu the wealthy man had it written
2. Blessed be Uryahu by Yahweh
3. and by his asherah; from his enemies he saved him!
4. [written] by Onyahu
5. ...and by his asherah
6. ... [and by] his [ashe]r[ah]

Hadley (1987a)

1. *'ryhw.h'šr.ktbh*	Uriyahu the rich wrote it.
2. *brk. 'ryhw.lyhwh*	Blessed be Uriyahu by Yahweh
3. *wmṣryh l'šrth hwš'lh*	For from his enemies by his [YHWH's] asherah he [YHWH] has saved him[3]
4. *l'nyhw*	by Oniyahu
5. *wl'šrth*	and by his asherah
6. *'??rth*	his a<she>rah

Raurell (1987)

1. *l'ryhw. hqšb. ktbh*	D'Uryahu. Vés amb compte amb la seva inscrició.
2. *brk. 'ryhw. lyhwh*	Que Uryahu sigui beneït per Jhwh
3. *wmṣryh. l'šrth. hwš. 'lh*	i (per la seva asherah) dels seus enemics/per la seva asherah/ l'ha salvat
4. *l'nyhw*	per Onyahu
5. *wl'šrth*	i per la seva asherah
6. *rh*	(?)

Margalit (1989)

1. *'ryhw. h'šr. ktbh*	Ur(i)yahu the rich composed it
2. *brk. 'ryhw. lyhwh. <ky*	'Blessed is Ur(i)yahu unto YHWH—
2.a. *hṣl(h)w. m(kp.) 'ybyh*	<For he rescued him from [the hands of] his enemies>,
3. *wmṣryh (...) hwš'. lh*	And from his foes [...] he saved him.'
l'nyhw	[Inscribed] by On[i]yahu

Lower

<lyhwh.>wl'<š>rth	<[Dedicated] to YHWH> and to his consort
(supralinear correction : *l'šrth*)	[Asherah]

Shea (1990)

1. *'ryhw . h'šr . ktbh*	Uriyahu was the one who wrote it.
2. *brk . 'ryhw . lyhwh*	Blessed be Uriyahu by Yahweh

---

3.   Or, '[and] by his asherah, for from his enemies he has saved him'.

3. *wmṣryh . l'šrth . wš 'lh* And his Egyptian [servant] by his asherah, and here is his handprint :

4. [hand sunk in relief] *l'nyhw* for Oniyahu

5. *l'šrth* By his asherah

6. *wl' . rth* And by his a . erah.

My own reading of l. 1-4

1. *'ryhw h'šr ktbh* Uryahu [qualification of Uryahu] his writing [or, inscription]

2. *brk 'ryhw lyhwh* Blessed be Uryahu by Yahweh,

3. *h'wryh l'šrt[h] hwš'lh* his light, by Asherah, she who holds her hand over him

4. *lrpyh w* by his *rpy*, who...

Kuntillet Ajrud

Inscription I (= pithos 1)

Meshel (1978)

'mr . '... h... k . 'mr . kyhl ... wlyw'śh . w...brkt . 'tkm . lyhwh . šmrn . wl'šrth.

Meshel (1979)

'mr . '... h... k . 'mr . kyhl ... wlyw'śh . w...brkt . 'tkm . lyhwh . šmrn . wl'šrth.
...said...said......and to Yo'sah. and...May you be blessed by Yahweh of Samaria and his holy of holies / tree symbol / consort.

Naveh (1979)

'mr X 'mr l-Y wlhyw'śh w<l-Z> brkt 'tkm lyhwh šmrn wl'šrth
'X says : Say to Y and Yau'aśah and <to Z>: I bless you by Yahweh our guardian, and by his Asherah.'

Stolz (1980)

'mr. '...h...k. 'mr. ljhl... wljw'sh. w... brkt 'tkm ljhwh. šmrn w l'šrth

Garbini (1981)

'mr...k 'mr lyhl...wlyhw'šh w...brkt 'tkm lyhwh šmrn wl'šrth
"X ha detto : dì a Yhl...e a Yaw'aśah e...: 'vi benedico da parte di Yahweh nostro custode e della sua Asherà'".

Angerstorfer (1982)

'mr . '...h...k. 'mr . ljhl... wljw'śh
w... brkt . 'tkm . ljhwh . šmrn . wl'šrth
Er sprach...... er sprach zu JHL...und zu Jo'ašah : '...Ich will euch segnen durch Jahwe, meinen/unseren Beschützer und durch seine 'Aserah!

Dever (1982)

'mr X 'mr l-Y wlyw'sh   X says : Say to Y and to Yau'asah
w<l-Z> brkt 'tkm   and <to Z> : I bless you
lyhwh šmrn wl'šrth   and by his Asherah (*sic*).

Emerton (1982)
('One of the inscriptions includes the words')

brkt. 'tkm.ljhwh.šmrn.wl'šrth.
I have blessed you by Yahweh šmrn and his Asherah

Dever (1984)

'mr X 'mr l-Y wlyw'šh w<l-Z> brkt'tkm
lyhwh šmrn wl'šrth
'X says : Say to Y and Yau'asah and <to Z>: I bless you
by Yahweh our guardian, and by his Asherah.'

Lemaire (1984a)

...brkt. 'tkm. lyhwh. šmrn. wl'šrth
...YHWH de Samarie...

Lemaire (1984b) lines 1-2

brkt 'tkm lyhwh šmrn wl'šrth
'I bless you by Yahweh of Samaria and by his asherah.'

Weinfeld (1984)

yhwh šmrn w'šrth
Yahweh of Samaria and his Asherah

Hadley (1987b)

'mr. '...h...k. 'mr. lyhl<l'l> wlyw'šh. w... brkt.'tkm. lyhwh. šmrn. wl'šrth.
X says : 'Say to Yehal<le'el> and to Yo'asah and <to Z>: "I bless you by Yahweh of
Samaria and by his asherah"'.

Meshel (1987)

'mr '<šy>w hm<l>k'mr lyhl wlyw'šh wl...
(King Ašaw says : Say to Jehal and to Jo'asah and to...)

Raurell (1987)

'mr X 'mr l-Y wlyw'šh w(l-Z) brkt'tkm
lyhwh šmrn wl'šrth
X diu : Digues a Y i a Yau'asah i (a Z): Us beneeixo
per Jahveh, el nostre guardià, i per la seva Asherah

North (1989)

'mr. '...h.k. 'mr. lyhl... wlyw'šh.w
<brkt. 'tkm> lyhwh. šmrn. wl'šrth
Say to...say to Yhl and to Yw'šh'
<I bless you> for Yahweh of Samaria and his Ašera

Otzen (1989)

'mr. '...h...k.	'...H..K siger
'mr. lyhl.. wlyw'šh. w...	Sig til YHL.. og til YW'ŠH og...:
brkt. 'tkm. lyhwh šmrn.	Jeg velsigner jer ved YHWH fra Samaria
wl'šrth.	og ved hans Ashera.[4]

Margalit (1990)
('the relevant part of the inscription')

... brkt. 'tkm. lyhwh.šmrn. wl'šrt
'...I have blessed you to < = in the name of> YHWH-of-Samaria and to his 'ŠRH'

Inscription II (= pithos 2)

Meshel (1978)

'mryhw'mrl .⁾dnyh...brktk . lyhwh...wl'šrth . ybrk . wyšmrk wyhy'm . 'dny

Meshel (1979)

'mryhw 'mrl . 'dny h...brktk . lyhwh...
wl'šrth . ybrk . wyšmrk wyhy 'm . 'dnu...
'Amaryau said to my lord...may you be blessed by Yahweh
and by his Asherah. Yahweh bless you and keep you and be with you...'

Naveh (1979)

'mr 'mryw 'mr l'dny X brktk lyhwh <šmrn> wl'šrth.
'Amaryau says : Say to my lord X : I bless you by Yahweh <our guardian>, and by
his Asherah.'

Garbini (1981)

'mryw 'mr l'dny h...brktk lyhwh...wl'šrth ybrk wyšmrk wyhy 'm 'dny...
'Amaryaw ha detto al mio signore... "ti benedico da perte di Yahweh...e della sua
Asherà. Ti benedicaeti custodisca e sia con il mio signore..."'

---

4. '...H..K says. Say to YHL.. and to YW'ŠH and...: I bless you by YHWH from Samaria
and by his Ashera.

Angerstorfer (1982)

'mrjw 'mr l 'dnj h...
brktk . ljhwh . jt-n . wl'šrth
jbrk . wjšmrk wjhj 'm . 'dnj
'Amarjaw sagte zu meinem Herrn / den Herren von...
Ich segne dich bei Jahwe ...und bei seiner 'Ašerah!
Er segne dich und schütze dich und er sei mit meinem Herrn

Chase (1982)

	< *'mr*>	Utterance of
1.	*'mryw '*	'Amaryaw
2.	*mr l. 'dn<y>*	Say to my lord,
3.	*hšlm . '<t>*	Is it well with you ?
4.	*brktk l<y>*	I bless you by
5.	*hwh <...*	Yahweh
6.	*wl'šrth . yb*	and by his/its (?)'asherah.
		May
7	*rk. wyšmrk*	he bless and keep you
8.	*wyhy 'm. 'd<n>*	and be with my lord.
9.	*y....>*	

Emerton (1982)
(Extracts of the inscription)

'mrjw says *brktk.ljhwh <...> wl'šrth.jbrk.wjšmrk wjhj 'm. 'dnj.*
I have blessed thee by Yahweh <...> and his Asherah. May he bless and keep thee,
and be with my lord.

Dever (1984)

> mr 'mryw 'mr l'dny <X> brktk
lyhwh <šmrn> wlšrth[5]
'Amaryau says : Say to my lord <X> : I bless you
by Yahweh <our guardian> and by his Asherah.'

Lemaire (1984b)
(line 4-6)

brktk lyhwh tmn wl'šrth
'I bless you by Yahweh of Teiman and by his asherah.'

Weinfeld (1984)

/ 'mr /'mryw 'mr l'dny...brktk lyhwh tmn wl'šrth, ybrk wyšmrk wyhy 'm 'dny yhwh
tmn w'šrth
Yahweh of Teman and his Asherah (*sic*)

---

5.   Dever notes that the scansion is uncertain.

ybrk wyšmrk wyhy 'm 'dny
'May he bless you and keep you and be with my lord.'

Hadley (1987b)

'mr 'mryw 'mr l.'dny hšlm. 't brktk. lyhwh tmn wl'šrth. ybrk. wyšmrk wyhy 'm. 'd<n>y...k
'Amaryaw says : say to my lord : Is it well with you ? I bless you by Yahweh of Teman and by his asherah. May he bless you and keep you and be with my lord.'

Raurell (1987)

'mr'mryw 'mr l'dny (X) brktk
lywh (šmrn) wl'šrth
Amaryau diu: Digues al meu senyou (X): et beneeixo
per Jahveh (el nostoe guardià) i per la seva Asherah

North (1989)

'mryw 'mrl. 'dny h...brktk. lyhwh. ..wl'šrth.ybrk.wysmrk wyhy 'm. 'dny

Otzen (1989)

'mr. 'mryw. 'mr l'dny	'MRYW siger: Sig til min herre:
hšlm. 't	Står det vel til med dig?
brktk. lyhwh tmn	velsigner dig ved YHWH fra Teman
wl'šrth.	og ved hans Ashera.
ybrk. wyšmrk wyhy 'm. 'dny...	Han velsigne dig og bevare dig og vaere med min herre...[6]

Margalit (1990)

...brktk. lyhwh. tmn. wl'šrth. ybrk.wyšmrk. wyhy. 'm. 'd<n>y
'I have blessed thee to YHWH-of-Teman and to his 'ŠRH. May he bless and keep thee and may he be with my lo<r>d.'

Inscription III

Meshel (1978)

1. *...brk.ymm.wyšb'w...*	'blessed be their day...'
2. *...hytb.yhwh...*	'God favored...'

Meshel (1979)

1. *...brk.ymm.wyšb'w*	Blessed be their day and...
2. *hytb.yhwh...*	Yahweh favored

6.   'MRYW says: Say to my lord : Are you well? I bless you by YHWH from Teman and by his Asherah. May he bless you and keep you and be with my lord...

Garbini (1981)

1. ...*y>brk ymm wyšb'w*	benedira i loro giorni ed essi saranno saziati ...
2. ...*h ytb yhwh...*	Yahweh farà del bene ...
3. ...*ytnw l...*	hanno dato a ...
4. ......*'šrt...*	Asherà

Angerstorfer (1982)

...*brk . jmm . wjšb'w*
hjšb . jhwh.........
Gesegnet sei/er hat gesegnet ihr Tag/die Tage und sie werden schwören. Gutes
bewirkt hat Jahwe...

Otzen (1989)

brk. ymm. wy'sb'w...	Han har velsignet deres dag, og de blev maette...
...*<n>tnw. l<y>hwh tymn*	...de har <gi>vet til YHW (*sic*) fra Teman
wl.. 'šrt<h>...	og til...ha<ns> Ashera...
hytb yhwh hty<mn>	YHWH fra Te<man>
w'šrth...	og hans Ashera har gjort vel.[7]

Other Inscriptions from Kuntillet Ajrud

Inscription A

Meshel (1978)

šm'yw bn 'zr

Meshel (1979)

sm'yw bn 'zr
'Shema'yau son of 'Ezer'

Naveh (1979)

šm'yw bn 'zr
'Shema'yau, son of 'Ezer'

Otzen (1989)

šm'yw bn'zr
ŠM'YW søn af 'ZR[8]

7.   'He has blessed their day, and they were filled...they have <gi>ven to YHW (*sic*) from Teman and to...hi<s> Asherah...YHWH from Te<man> and his Asherah has done well.'
8.   ŠM'YW son of 'ZR.

Inscription B

Meshel (1978)

1. *...wb'rḥ. 'l.b...*	and in the (just) ways of God
2. *...brk.b'l.bym.ml...*	blessed be Baal in the day of...
3. *...šm. 'l.bym.ml...*	the name of God in the day of...

Meshel (1979)

1. *wb'rḥ. 'l.b...*	and in the (just) ways of El
2. *brk.b'l,bym.ml...*	blessed be Ba'al in the day of...
3. *šm.'l.bym.ml...*	the name of El in the day of...

Garbini (1981)

1. *...wb'rḥ 'l b ...*	sulla via di El
2. *...brk b'l bym ml...*	ha benedetto Baal nel giorno
3. *...šm 'l bym ml...*	il nome di El nel giorno

Angerstorfer (1982)
(Calls the inscription Phoenician)

'šrt(h)......jtnw l.........
wb'rḫ . 'l . b............
...brk . b'l . bjm . ml...
šm . 'l . bjm . ml.........
' Aširtah und x...haben gegeben dem/der/den...
und auf dem Weg des 'El / Gottes......
......gesegnet hat (?) Ba'al am Tag
der Name (?) des 'El / Gottes am Tag...

Catastini (1982)

1. *...wb'rḥ/'l/b...*	...e nel cammino del dio <o El?>
2. *...brk/b'l/bym/ml...*	...benedetto Ba'al nel giorno di...
3. *...šm/'l/bym/ml...*	...il nome del dio <o El?> nel giorno di...

Dever (1982)

Blessed by Ba'al in the day...
...the name of El in the day...

Weinfeld (1984)

1. *wbzrḥ...'l wymsn hrm..*	when God shines forth (= appears), the mountains melt...
2. *brk b'l bym mlḥ<mt>*	Baal on the day of w<ar>
3. *lšm 'l bym mlḥ<mt>*	for the name of God on day of w<ar>.

Otzen (1989)

wbzrḥ...'l br...	Når El kommer strålende til syne i...
wymsn hrm...	smelter bjerge
brk bʻl bym mlḥ<mh ...>	Velsignet vaere Baʻal på kri<gens> dag
lšm'l bym mlḥ<mh ...>	...for Els navn på kri<gens> dag...[9]

Pithos 2, Inscription C

Weinfeld (1984)[10]

kl 'šr yš'l m'š ḥnn...wntn lh yhw klbbh
Whatever he requests from a man may be favored...let Yahweh give him according to his wish.

Hadley (1987b)

kl 'šr yš'l m'š ḥnn... wntn lh yhw klbbh
Whatever he asks from a man, may it be favored...and let Yahweh give unto him as he wishes (according to his heart).

Otzen (1989)

kl 'šr yš'l m'š ḥnn...	Alt hvad han forlanger af et menneske, vil Han tilstå ham...
wntn lh yhw klbbh	og YHW vil give ham, som han ønsker.[11]

Inscription D

Meshel (1976)

l'bdyw bn 'dnh brk h' lyhw
'Given by 'Ovadiah son of 'Adanah, may he be blessed by God.'

Meshel (1978)

l'bdyw bn 'dnh brk h' kyhw

Meshel (1979)

l'bdyw bn 'dnh brk h'lyhw
(Belonging) to 'Obadyau son of 'Adnah, may he be blessed by Yahwe(h).

---

9.   When El shines forth in...mountains melt...Blessed be Baal in the day of w<ar>...for the name of El on the day of w<ar>.

10.   Weinfeld sees this inscription as a continuation of inscription VI. He does not divide the two, but sees them as a unity.

11.   All that he demands from a man, He will give him...And YHW will give him after his wish.

Naveh (1979)

l'bdyw bn 'dnh brk h' lyhw
[given] By 'Obadyau son of 'Adnah. May he be blessed by Yahweh.

Weinfeld (1984)

l'bdyw bn 'dnh[12] *brk h' lyhw*

Otzen (1989)

l'bdyw bn 'dnh	Tilhører 'BDYW, søn af 'DNH.
brk h' lyhw	Velsignet vaere han ved YHW[13]

---

12. *'dn* should, according to Weinfeld, be understood as 'irrigation', like the Ugaritic *'dnmṭrh*, *CTA* 4.V.68, and cf. Ps. 36.9.
13. Belongs to 'BDYW, son of 'DNH. Blessed be he by YHW.

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